

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

Delaware Partnership Receives \$50,000 for Wetlands Project

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$50,000** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for the **Delaware Habitat Stewardship Project** in **Delaware's Sussex and New Castle Counties**. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands conservation projects to benefit wildlife. Projects must meet certain biological criteria to be considered for funding, and partners must be able to match the grant request 1:1 with nonfederal funds.

The natural resources of Delaware Bay serve a variety of functions critical to the continued economic success and quality of life enjoyed by residents in this region. The 132,000 acres of freshwater wetlands and almost 90,000 acres of tidal wetlands found in the bay's watersheds support 2,700 species of plants and wildlife. In spite of the enormous value and international significance of the bay, its functionality is threatened today by development and intensive farming practices that have contributed to the degradation and fragmentation of wetlands throughout the State. These and other land-use conversions, combined with poor land management practices, have resulted in the deterioration of the State's and the bay's water quality, which impacts both human and wildlife communities.

Working with willing landowners, project partners will focus on protecting and restoring key headwaters and riparian wetlands on private lands. Over time, these activities will result in the creation of wetlands corridors, or continuous stretches of wetlands and associated uplands, important for preserving genetic diversity in species' populations and for providing much needed migratory bird habitat. The bay is considered one of the most important wintering areas for birds in North America and is a major staging and stopover area in the **Atlantic Flyway**. More than 250 species of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, passerines, and other migrants—totaling over 1 million birds—spend at least a part of their life cycle in and around the bay.

This project will restore 35 acres of wetlands and associated uplands in five project areas in the bay's Augustine, Cedar Swamp, and Broadkill watersheds. Biologists, in cooperation with the landowners, will develop a restoration management plan for each project area. Effects of the restoration work at each site will be monitored and revisions will be made to the management plans, if needed. Management of restored emergent wetlands will benefit migrating and wintering green-winged teal, American black duck, mallard, and northern pintail. Also taking advantage of these habitats are federally and state-listed endangered species such as Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel, short-eared owl, northern harrier, sedge wren, and eastern tiger salamander.

DIVISION OF BIRD HABITAT
CONSERVATION
NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS
CONSERVATION COUNCIL
4401 NORTH FAIRFAX DRIVE
MAIL STOP 4075
ARLINGTON, VA 22203
birdhabitat.fws.gov • 703/358-1784



Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, and Delaware Division of Soil and Water Conservation added **\$100,000** to the grant amount to achieve their conservation goals. Their work also advances the habitat goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information on this project, contact Spencer Waller, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., swaller@ducks.org, (410) 677-3792, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.