

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

# project flash

## New York Partnerships Receive \$176,852 for Wetlands Projects

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$176,852** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for **four projects** in **New York**. 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.

### Chautauqua Lake Outlet Greenway Project

Located in New York's **Chautauqua County** in **Congressional District 27**, this project is a component of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy's (Conservancy) larger campaign to preserve the remaining undeveloped, ecologically significant Chautauqua Lake shoreline and the lake outlet's Chadakoin River wetlands. Preservation of these wetlands is crucial, as only 11 percent of lakeshore habitats remain undeveloped. The project area, which rarely freezes, is a point of concentration for waterfowl and other wetland-dependent birds during migration. Audubon New York has designated Chautauqua Lake an Important Bird Area, and the local Audubon chapter is nominating the lake as a State Bird Conservation Area.

The outlet's wetlands cover 461 acres. Of these, 210 acres are within and owned by the City of Jamestown. The 251 acres in the Town of Ellicott are in private ownership and zoned Mercantile, subjecting the wetlands to commercial and industrial development pressures. The threat is real. Nearby wetlands have been and continue to be filled for commercial uses, and neighboring junkyards and other commercial facilities have littered the habitat with debris. The project area's proximity to the junction of State Route 430 and Route 17 (proposed Interstate 86) increases the potential for development pressures.

The Conservancy has already purchased a 23-acre tract in the project area and is in the process of purchasing an adjacent 27-acre parcel, protecting more than one-half mile of shoreline. The Conservancy, Jamestown Center City Development Corporation, and Jamestown Audubon Society (Society) will use their **\$45,000** grant, plus **\$47,720** in matching funds, to acquire and restore an additional 50 acres along the outlet's waterfront. The partnership also will conduct a baseline inventory of the property's flora and fauna, remove exotic plant species, and develop a mechanism for assessing the success of their conservation efforts.

Several waterfowl species are expected to benefit from the partners' work, including northern pintail, American black duck, mallard, lesser scaup, greater scaup, wood duck, redhead, canvasback, ring-necked duck, and American wigeon. The lake provides important stopover habitat for other



migratory birds as well, especially shorebirds. Osprey, sharp-shinned hawk, and Cooper's hawk, all state species of concern, also will benefit from the project. The public will have access to the acquired areas for low-impact recreation, such as birding, and for educational purposes. Partners' work also contributes to the goals of the North American Waterfowls Management Plan's **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Tammie L. Fleegeer, Jamestown Center City Development Corporation, [tfleegeer@gebbie.org](mailto:tfleegeer@gebbie.org), (716) 487-1062, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.

### **Wildlife Habitat Enhancement at Lake Alice Wildlife Management Area Project**

This project is found in **Clinton County** in **Congressional District 24**. The Lake Alice Wildlife Management Area (WMA), managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (Department), consists of approximately 36 acres of wetlands and 190 acres of associated uplands. It contains the largest of three open-water areas created in 1907 by a series of dams on Tracy Brook, within the Lake Champlain Watershed. The WMA provides critical habitat for migratory waterfowl and other waterbirds, upland gamebirds, and songbirds. Several state species of special concern are found here: pied-billed grebe, red-headed woodpecker, northern harrier, American bittern, whip-poor-will, sedge wren, osprey, red-shouldered hawk, upland sandpiper, common nighthawk, least bittern, and black tern. Not surprisingly, then, the WMA is a premier location in the region for wildlife-based recreation.

The WMA's marsh has not been actively managed for several decades due to budget constraints. The result has been the intrusion of dense stands of cattails into what were once open-water areas in the marsh. Using their **\$46,902** grant and **\$61,473** in matching funds, Plattsburgh State University, the Department, William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will enhance the WMA's habitat diversity and food availability. They will rehabilitate water-control structures on Tracy Brook, creating 5 interconnected pothole wetlands, dredge and reconfigure 13 existing potholes, and remove invasive purple loosestrife. To improve upland game bird habitat, the Department will supervise clear cutting of four 5-acre plots in the WMA's forested areas, and it also will install bluebird and wood duck nest boxes. Existing meadows will be maintained by annual mowing, improving nesting habitat for a variety of waterfowl species. The partners' efforts for wildlife also will enhance the recreational opportunities for visitors to the WMA. This project also advances the goals of the **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Mei-Yin Wu, Plattsburgh State University, [melinda.wu@plattsburgh.edu](mailto:melinda.wu@plattsburgh.edu), (518) 564-4036, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.

### **Mohawk Pool Wetland Enhancement Project**

Partners of this project will be working in **Genesee and Orleans Counties** in **Congressional District 26**. Mohawk Pool is situated in the Service's Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, which encompasses 10,818 acres of freshwater marshes and hardwood swamps bounded by woods, forests, pastures, and wet meadows. The refuge provides crucial habitat for both resident and migratory wildlife. In fact, the habitat's value is so high, the Audubon Society has designated the refuge an Important Bird Area.

Partners' work on the refuge will focus on enhancing Mohawk Pool, the largest impoundment in the refuge, containing approximately 1,100 acres of emergent marsh, 150 acres of forested wetland, and 100 acres of open water. The pool was created via dike construction and water-control-structure installation to capture and manage spring runoff from the Oak Orchard Creek watershed. The pool's uneven terrain, however, causes both large areas of open water and large areas of dense monotypic cattail stands, neither

of which is desirable as stopover or breeding habitat. Maximum water management capability is paramount to providing high-quality wetlands.

The partners' matching contribution, totaling **\$39,950**, has already gone towards completing the enhancement work done by Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on the State's Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area (WMA) wetlands to the east of the refuge and on the Tonawanda WMA to the southwest. Partners will further enhance this complex of wetlands using the **\$39,950** grant to improve the refuge's water-management infrastructure, which ultimately will help to significantly increase emergent marsh habitat. The Service will contribute \$1,196,500 in nonmatching funds to support the work of constructing or improving 3 miles of water transfer channels within and adjacent to Mohawk Pool. These channels are needed to transfer water between the pool's subimpoundments, to raise or lower water levels as needed.

The varied habitats in and around the refuge support approximately 266 species of birds, 42 species of mammals, and 35 species of reptiles and amphibians. An abundance of waterfowl species use the pool, and both the bald eagle, which has nested on the refuge since 1986, and the osprey, which has nested there since 1998, are found soaring over the pool in search of a meal. The Service will manage the pool not only to benefit waterfowl but also to address the needs of other wetland-associated species such as black tern American woodcock, American and least bitterns, Virginia rail, lesser yellowlegs, and pectoral sandpiper. Partners' efforts also help to advance the **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture's** habitat goals.

For more information about this project, contact Robert Lamoy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [bob\\_lamoy@fws.gov](mailto:bob_lamoy@fws.gov), (585) 948-5445, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.

### **Sink Hole Marsh Wetland Enhancement Project**

Located in **Wayne County** in **Congressional District 25**, Sink Hole Marsh represents a small, relatively pristine portion of an extensive wetland ecosystem that once covered more than 40,000 acres: the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. Historically, unlike much of the complex, Sink Hole Marsh was not significantly affected by the development of the Barge Canal nor by agriculture, due to the prohibitive cost of draining the marsh. However, in the mid 1950s, a 1,000-acre area in the south of the marsh was drained and converted to farmland. The marsh, currently owned and managed by the Vanderbilt Marsh Club (Club), was reduced to 1,200 acres in size.

Over time, the southern edge of the marsh adjacent to the farmland has deteriorated, negatively affecting the wetland's hydrology. This, in turn, has led to increased colonization of exotic purple loosestrife and of monotypic stands of cattail. To remedy the situation, the Club, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and Ducks Unlimited, Inc., received a **\$45,000** grant, to which they added **\$57,500**, to protect the marsh from further deterioration and to enhance its functioning. The partners plan to construct a 1.5-mile berm along the marsh's southern border to improve water-level management capabilities. To combat the invasion of purple loosestrife, they will release 9,000 leaf-feeding beetles into the marsh. These biological agents have been used successfully in other areas of the complex to control the plant. They will also develop a water-management plan that will encourage the establishment of a diverse plant community and the control of carp, a fish that debases water quality and feeds on submerged aquatic vegetation, a favorite food of waterfowl. As habitat is enhanced and managed in the Sink Hole Marsh, the complex as a whole will benefit.

Over 1 million migratory ducks and geese, including species such as Southern James Bay Canada goose, northern pintail, American black duck, mallard, and lesser and greater scaups, stopover at the complex

during migration. Thousands of shorebirds, waders, and passerines also drop in on their way north, and endangered, threatened, and special concern species, such as bald eagle, osprey, and northern harrier, nest in the area. The **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture** also will benefit as this project helps to advance its habitat goals.

For more information about this project, contact Steve Foster, Vanderbilt Marsh Club, sfoster1@rochester.rr.com, (585) 396-2276, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith\_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.