

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

Texas Partnerships Receive \$116,250 for Wetlands Projects

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$116,250** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for **three projects** in **Texas**. 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.

Riparian Corridor Restoration along the Canadian River Project

Found in **Hemphill County** in **Congressional District 13**, the Canadian River has long been recognized as an important area for migrating and wintering waterfowl as well as for sandhill cranes. The river and its associated riparian wetlands at times provide the only unfrozen, open-water wetlands habitat for waterfowl in the Texas Panhandle during winter months. The dams of upstream reservoirs affect these wetlands, reducing the number of scouring floods as well as the river channel's width. Also, over the past 50 years, invasive plants (salt cedar and Russian olive) have encroached into the seasonally flooded wet meadows and riparian wetlands along the river, greatly altering the ecosystem and further confining the river channel.

Working with willing landowners, project partners will restore a minimum of 516 acres of seasonally flooded wet meadows by removing undesirable vegetation. This work will benefit migrating and wintering waterfowl and other wetland-associated birds of the **Central Flyway**.

Project partners include Texas Prairie Rivers Region, Inc., Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, and **Playa Lakes Joint Venture**. They will use their **\$50,000** grant and **\$74,167** in matching funds to achieve their project goals. Their work will complement ongoing and planned wetland restoration activities in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Gene Howe Wildlife Management Area, located near the project area.

For more information about this project, contact Remelle Farrar, Texas Prairie Rivers Region, Inc., canadian@yft.net, (806) 323-5397, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.

Foster-Mattern Partnership Playas and Moist-Soil Management Project

The Foster-Mattern Partnership property, located in **Hansford County** in **Congressional District 13**, is a 637-acre parcel of farmland containing three small playa lakes that are 4.2, 5.5, and 3.9 acres in size, respectively. Like many historic, small wetlands in the Short-grass Prairie Region of Texas, these playas once supported migrating and wintering waterfowl and other resident and migratory wetland-associated species.

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Two of the three playas have been under continuous cultivation for many years, and the resulting siltation of the playas has prevented emergence of characteristic wetlands vegetation. The smallest playa has been spared cultivation and harbors many of the plant species normally found in such a wetland.

Partners will restore 75 acres of grassland surrounding the three playas to prevent further siltation of the wetland basins. They also will enhance the playas by installing a well and water-control structures to allow for moist-soil management, providing for the reestablishment of broadleaf annuals and typical playa vegetation. Managed uplands will be favorable to nesting birds, including dabbling ducks, upland game birds, and songbirds of the **Central Flyway**. Partners' work will complement projects conducted on the remainder of the parcel under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

Partners including Pheasants Forever, Inc., Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Foster-Mattern Partnership, and **Playa Lakes Joint Venture**, will match their **\$16,250** grant with **\$19,559** to accomplish their project goals.

For more information about this project, contact Brandon Hoffner, Pheasants Forever Inc., pheasants@kci.net, (970) 466-1849, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.

Gene Howe Wildlife Management Area: Restoration of Subirrigated Wet Meadows and Natural Sloughs Project

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (Department) and the National Wild Turkey Federation will use their **\$50,000** grant, plus **\$63,900** in matching funds, to restore and enhance 600 acres of subirrigated, seasonally flooded riparian meadows and to restore 50 acres of riparian sloughs and creeks. The work will be conducted on the Department's Gene Howe Wildlife Management Area in **Hemphill County** in **Congressional District 13**.

The management area encompasses 5,800 acres, with approximately 2,200 acres of subirrigated riparian meadows and forested areas, natural sloughs and creeks, and moist-soil management wetlands. The quality and quantity of the habitats has diminished over the past 20 years due to the invasion of undesirable, exotic plants such as Russian olive and salt cedar. The partners' activities will make more water available for the existing moist-soil impoundments and restore hydrology in the riparian meadows. The removal of silt and invasive plants within the sloughs and creeks will restore the water flow and create open-water areas for waterfowl and other wetland-associated birds.

Seasonally flooded riparian wetlands and natural sloughs and creeks are used as foraging, roosting, and loafing habitat for migrating and wintering northern pintail, mallard, greater and lesser scaups, ring-necked duck, among other waterfowl species. Partners' efforts also will enhance the nesting and brood-rearing areas by increasing nest-site availability adjacent to moist-soil units. Migratory shorebirds, such as American avocet, Wilson's phalarope, stilt and solitary sandpipers, and long-billed curlew, are expected to use the riparian wetlands and the moist-soil impoundments near the project site. This project also helps to advance the habitat conservation goals of the **Playa Lakes Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Jeff Raasch, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, jeff.raasch@tpwd.state.tx.us, (512) 389-4328, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.