

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

# project flash

## Colorado 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 **Pole Mountain Ranch Conservation Easement Project in Colorado's Jackson County in Congressional District 3**. 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 Pole Mountain Ranch lies in an area of Colorado known as North Park, a large, treeless, high-altitude basin containing irrigated pastureland, hay meadows, mountain meadows, willow-lined streams, shallow-lake and wetland areas, and dry, rolling sagebrush shrublands. Partners of this project will acquire a perpetual conservation easement on the ranch's Pole Mountain Lake, a 120-acre, natural shallow-water lake—considered one of the most important privately owned wetlands within the basin—and adjacent uplands. **Central Flyway** migratory birds frequent the lake, including several thousand Canada geese and a variety of ducks, such as American wigeon, mallard, northern pintail, canvasback, redhead, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, and cinnamon, green-winged, and blue-winged teals.

Lands protected by the easement also will secure forage areas for the basin's pronghorn antelope, deer, Rocky Mountain elk, and moose populations and nesting and brood-rearing habitat associated with three greater sage-grouse leks—the sage-grouse is an Audubon WatchList species. The project area also helps to sustain other birds in population decline such as sage sparrow, Brewer's sparrow, and Swainson's hawk.

The project area lies within an important conservation focus area for The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and the North Park Wetland Focus Area Committee, a subworking group of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Intermountain West Joint Venture**.

The conservation easement, together with adjacent U.S. Bureau of Land Management lands and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge, will help to create a contiguous 3,460-acre tract of habitat for the basin's wildlife.

Because the ranch's owner, Dennis Brinker, is a County Commissioner and member of the Colorado State Land Board, the work done on his land will serve as a catalyst to generate support for other such projects in North Park, demonstrating the opportunities available to other landowners who also would like to protect their land.

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The partners involved, the Conservancy, Great Outdoors Colorado, and Pole Mountain Ranch, are adding **\$810,000** to the grant amount to accomplish their project's goal.

For more information about this project, contact Nancy Smith, The Nature Conservancy, [nsmith@tnc.org](mailto:nsmith@tnc.org), (720) 974-7012, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.