

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

Pennsylvania Partnerships Receive \$100,000 for Wetlands Projects

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$100,000** in funding under the North American Wetland's Conservation Act's Small Grant Program for **two projects in Pennsylvania**. 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.

Upper Delaware Wetland Restoration Project

A major stopover in the **Atlantic Flyway**, the Delaware Bay estuary's wetlands and beaches host massive populations of migratory shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds every spring and fall. More than 250 species, totaling some 1 million birds, stopover in the greater Delaware Bay ecosystem to feed and rest during migration. Hundreds of thousands of shorebirds—representing nearly 80 percent of some populations—stop here before continuing their journey north to the breeding grounds. In spite of the enormous value and the international significance of the bay, its integrity is threatened by development and intensive farming practices in the watersheds that feed into it.

Partners of the Upper Delaware Wetland Restoration Project, located in **Wayne County in Congressional District 10**, will focus on protecting and restoring key headwaters and riparian wetlands on private lands, which, in turn, will help to conserve the bay's functionality. Over time, these activities will result in the creation of wetland corridors, or continuous stretches of wetland and upland buffers, that are important for providing much needed habitat for migrating birds and for supporting genetic diversity in wildlife species' populations.

The partners will restore 65 acres of wetlands and 15 acres of associated uplands in 15 areas within the Calkins Creek and Lackawaxen River watersheds. They will restore wetland hydrology by plugging drainage ditches, constructing low-level berms, creating shallow excavated areas, and installing water-control structures. Costs incurred by landowners for restoration work will be matched 100 percent by partners. Project biologists will develop a Restoration Management Plan for each site, and partners will complete annual project monitoring, including any needed revisions to the management plans.

Waterfowl expected to benefit from this project include species such as canvasback, redhead, Atlantic brant, American black duck, gadwall, American wigeon, and green-winged teal. In addition, the resulting improvement in water quality downstream will improve foraging habitat for greater and lesser scaups; black, white-winged, and surf scoters; and long-tailed ducks.

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Other migratory species also will benefit. Estimates suggest the bay supports 30 percent of the Northern Hemisphere's population of shorebirds, such as long-billed and short-billed dowitchers, American avocet, Hudsonian godwit, upland sandpiper, and dunlin. Delaware Bay has been recognized as one of only two Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network International Sites on the Atlantic Coast.

Partners Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Pennsylvania Game Commission, Wayne County Conservation District, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use their **\$50,000** grant and **\$150,000** in matching funds to achieve their conservation goals. Their work also advances the habitat conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Scott Reinhart, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., sreinhart@ducks.org, (570) 272-2537, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.

Akeley Swamp Hydrology Restoration Project

Located in **Warren County** in **Congressional District 3**, Akeley Swamp is a Northwest Subfocus Area within the **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture's** Pennsylvania Waterfowl Focus Area. It is an important stopover area for species such as Southern James Bay Canada goose, American black duck, mallard, northern pintail, wood duck, American wigeon, blue- and green-winged teals, hooded merganser, gadwall, and northern shoveler. The swamp also attracts large concentrations of migrant passerines, hawks, shorebirds, and other waterbirds. More than 145 species of birds have been recorded in the Akeley wetlands. The swamp's habitat is, in fact, so important to avian species that the Pennsylvania Audubon Society designated it an Important Bird Area.

The swamp covers approximately 168 acres. Its functioning has been influenced significantly by an abandoned Penn-Central Railroad grade, which has served as the swamp's main impoundment structure. Three small drainages flow through the grade and empty into Conewango Creek. Historically, beavers dammed each of these drainages, maintaining a flooded condition in the swamp. When food sources were depleted in 1997, the beavers abandoned their dams, which have degraded to such an extent that they no longer impound waters, severely affecting the hydrology of the Akeley Swamp system.

Project partners will use their **\$50,000** grant to restore the swamp's hydrology, installing three water-level-control structures, a fish ladder, and erosion-control measures. The habitat will be managed for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wetland-associated species, with an emphasis on providing forage areas during both the spring and fall migration.

Partners of this project, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Pennsylvania Game Commission, and Warren County Council of Sportsman Clubs, contributed **\$95,000** in matching funds to the project, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service added \$25,000 in nonmatching funds.

For more information about this project, contact Christopher R. Clouser, cclouser@ducks.org, (814) 832-4676, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, keith_morehouse@fws.gov, (703) 358-1784.