

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

## South Carolina Partnerships Receive \$139,150 for Wetlands Projects

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$139,150** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for **three projects in South Carolina**. 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.

### **Bear Island Club, Inc., Enhancement Project**

The Bear Island Club's 500-acre tract contains managed, freshwater wetlands and approximately 60 acres of brackish-water wetlands. The acreage, located in **Colleton County in Congressional District 6**, is surrounded by protected private and public wetlands and wooded areas in the ACE Basin, a 350,000-acre natural treasure of relatively intact uplands and wetlands. Attesting to its importance to waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and songbirds, the basin falls within the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture ACE Basin Focus Area** and within an area identified as a high priority for conservation by the South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative. The Nature Conservancy also designated the area as one of its "Last Great Places."

The club's property is protected by a perpetual conservation easement held by Ducks Unlimited, Inc. However, deterioration of existing dikes and water-control structures and poor drainage have made the land difficult to manage. The landowner would like to retain the historical ecological aspects of the property and to manage it in such a way that wildlife habitat conservation and timber production are compatible. To achieve these goals, partners will enhance land management capabilities by elevating the height of eroded dikes, installing new water-control structures, digging new drainage ditches and excavating old ones, and installing quarter drains. In doing so, the needs of multiple species will be met through better management of wetlands to encourage the growth of submerged aquatic vegetation—a favorite food of waterfowl—and to allow annual planting of small grains—a favorite of songbirds—in portions of the property's fields.

Partners' work is expected to provide year-round habitat for breeding waterfowl, wading birds, and other wetland-associated birds of the **Atlantic Flyway**. The project's benefits will extend to nonfeathered wildlife as well—river otters and alligators also forage on the club's property. The club and its partner Ducks Unlimited are adding **\$142,735** to their **\$49,750** grant to achieve their project goals.

For more information about this project, contact Ross Catterton, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, [bhiott@banksc.com](mailto:bhiott@banksc.com), (843) 844-8490, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.

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### **Rainey Acres Farm Managed Wetlands Enhancement Project**

Also located in **Colleton County** in **Congressional District 6**, the Rainey Acres Farm contains three upland freshwater impoundments. Adjacent to the impoundments is an 8-acre, forested area dominated by mast-producing oaks, and Tupelo Swamp lies at the farm's southern boundary. The landowners manage the land for timber and crops, but they also want to manage their land to benefit wildlife. The objectives of this project are to enhance the farm's property to contribute to the betterment of the larger landscape, ACE Basin, and to increase foraging, nesting, and resting opportunities for the wildlife using this area.

Partners Rainey Acres Farm and Ducks Unlimited, Inc., will use their **\$39,400** grant to enhance 23 acres of existing habitat, providing additional feeding, nesting, and transient habitat important to migrating, wintering, and resident waterfowl. Ducks Unlimited's conservation easement on the property, valued at **\$120,000**, will be used as match. Partners will retop degraded dikes and install flashboard risers to improve water-level management capabilities and will seasonally flood the farm's forested area, creating a greentree reservoir. This work will create habitat suitable for wetland-associated species in the **Atlantic Flyway**, including wood duck, white ibis, blue- and green-winged teal, hooded merganser, killdeer, Wilson's snipe, and American woodcock. One of the largest wood stork rookeries in the State occurs within a 3-mile radius of Rainey Acres. The storks, listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, currently use the farm's freshwater impoundments as a feeding area and have used the adjacent swampland as a nesting area when water levels are ample enough. The partners' work will allow the landowners to not only manage for timber and crops but also wildlife. Their work also helps advance the habitat goals of the **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information on this project, contact Jan Moore, Rainey Acres Farm, [unclewooley@comcast.net](mailto:unclewooley@comcast.net), (843) 554-5143, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.

### **Double "O" Wetland Enhancement Project**

The Double "O" Plantation, also located in the ACE Basin, but in **Charleston County** in **Congressional District 1**, contains the Double "O" Impoundment, consisting of 125 acres of brackish water. Although the perimeter dike is intact, there are numerous improvements needed to enhance and maintain habitat quality and land management capabilities. Increasing the width of dikes and rehabilitating water-control structures will allow water levels to be managed to enhance the growth of desirable plant food for waterfowl and other wildlife. The diverse wetlands are expected to provide year-round habitat for **Atlantic Flyway** breeding wood ducks, wading birds, and wetland-associated songbirds, as well as foraging habitat for bald eagles, ospreys, river otters, wood storks, and alligators. Late winter and spring draw-downs will be timed to provide resting and foraging habitat for migrating shorebirds.

The Double "O" Plantation partnered with The Nature Conservancy to make this project a reality. To achieve their project goals, they will match their **\$50,000** grant with **\$102,943**. Their accomplishments also will contribute to the habitat conservation goals of the **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture**.

For more information about this project, contact Richard and Clifton Orvin, Double "O" Plantation, [creekdock@aol.com](mailto:creekdock@aol.com), (843) 884-4956, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.