

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

## Louisiana Partnership Receives \$5,760,613 for Wetlands Projects

On September 8, 2004, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, as authorized under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, approved **\$5,760,613** in funding for **six projects** in **Louisiana**. A portion of one project also takes place in Texas. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands 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. Project partners are matching their grants with a total of **\$16,976,470** and are adding a total of **\$3,139,467** in nonmatching funds towards their projects.

### Chenier Plain Coastal Wetlands Conservation Phase II Project

This project is located in Louisiana's **Cameron Parish** in **Congressional District 7**, as well as in part of Texas. The main threat to the Chenier Plain region of southwest Louisiana and southeast Texas is altered hydrology, primarily caused by the intrusion of saltwater and tidal energy via manmade canals. In Phase II, partners will use their **\$998,952 grant** to build on their previous efforts by restoring or enhancing **10,719 acres** of coastal and prairie marshes in both states.

In Louisiana, partners will enhance 182 acres on Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). In Texas, they will enhance 4,031 acres on or adjacent to McFaddin NWR, restore or enhance 2,970 acres of privately owned land, restore and enhance 3,506 acres on the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and enhance 30 acres on the Lower Neches WMA. Situated at the southern end of the **Central and Mississippi Flyways**, the project area supports more than 40 percent of the Gulf Coast's population of wintering ducks and geese. Waterfowl as well as shorebirds, wading birds, and songbirds in the Gulf Coast Prairie Bird Conservation Region will benefit from partners' actions. The project area's public lands will be available for recreational and educational activities.

Partners include Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Camp Bailey, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Jefferson County Drainage District No.6, private landowners, LaBelle Properties, Walter Umphrey, and British Petroleum(BP)/Amoco. They are matching grant funds with **\$6,256,930**, which includes a portion (\$5 million) of the value of a 71,130-acre property donated to the State of Louisiana by BP/Amoco in Phase I of this project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service are contributing another **\$645,290** in nonmatching funds. This project advances the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Gulf Coast Joint Venture**, Partners in Flight, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and North American Waterbird Conservation Plan.

*For more information about this project, contact Keith McKnight, Regional Biologist-Texas/New Mexico, Ducks Unlimited, Inc.,*

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### **Hanson Marsh Hydrologic Restoration Project**

This project is located in Louisiana's **Terrebonne Parish** in **Congressional District 3**. The Hanson Unit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge contains fresh floating marshes that were formed under low tidal-energy conditions and stable water levels. Like much of coastal Louisiana, the refuge's marsh habitats have experienced rapid deterioration since the mid 1950s, due largely to manmade canals, high-water stages, and erosion from boat traffic. Altered hydrology and rapid water-level fluctuations damage the fragile substrate and make it difficult for the vegetation needed by birds and other wildlife to become established.

Project partners will use their **\$765,728 grant** to affect a total of **45,366 acres** of coastal marshes and associated uplands habitats within and around the refuge. They will restore wetlands on the refuge's 778-acre Hanson Unit and another 70 acres of emergent marsh on surrounding private lands within the unit's management area. Partners also will enhance 4,076 acres on Point Au Chein State Wildlife Management Area, 38,174 acres on Apache Corporation land, and 2,268 on Michael St. Martin/Mandalay Plantation. **Mississippi Flyway** waterfowl species, the federally and state-listed endangered brown pelican, and songbirds and shorebirds in the Gulf Coast Prairie Bird Conservation Region will benefit from partners' efforts. People will have improved habitat for hunting, fishing, and other recreational and educational activities on public lands in the project area.

Partners Apache Corporation, Michael St. Martin/Mandalay Plantation, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (Department), and Duphil will contribute **\$2,134,000** in matching funds, and the Department and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service will contribute **\$25,629** in nonmatching funds. Their project advances the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Gulf Coast Joint Venture**, Partners in Flight, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, and Coast 2050: Toward a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana.

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### **Lower Mississippi Valley Priority Sites Phase I Project**

This project is located in Louisiana's **St. Martin and West Feliciana Parishes** in **Congressional Districts 3 and 6**. Clearing and conversion of bottomland hardwood forests for other uses have resulted in a more than 80 percent loss of the lower Mississippi Valley's original 24,000,000-acre ecosystem. Manmade channels and levees also have significantly altered the area's hydrology. To help reverse these effects, project partners will protect a total of **8,799 acres** of forested wetland habitats within or around The Nature Conservancy's (Conservancy) Cypress Island Preserve and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge. Some 3,146 acres of that total also will be restored.

ChevronTexaco and the Riehl Family are donating fee title to a total of 6,554 acres of forested wetlands—6,480 acres and 74 acres, respectively—to the Conservancy, expanding its preserve significantly. Partners will acquire fee title to another 341 acres of inholdings within the preserve from willing sellers. Hydrology and habitat will be restored on 1,425 of the acquired acres. Partners also will acquire the 1,904-acre Cypress Farms tract for inclusion into the Service's refuge. Some 1,656 acres of previously cleared, bottomland hardwood habitat on the tract will be restored and another 65 of the acquired acres will be managed as a moist-soil unit for migratory birds.

Partners' efforts will benefit 19 **Mississippi Flyway** waterfowl species; a myriad of shorebirds, landbirds, and waterbirds; and the federally listed threatened Louisiana black bear. The public will gain from improved water quality and flood storage, and from improved recreational opportunities on public lands in the project area. Partners include the Conservancy, ChevronTexaco, City of St. Martinville, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and the Riehl Family. They received a **\$995,933 grant** and are matching it with **\$1,763,837**. The Service and the Conservancy are adding another **\$1,668,548** in nonmatching funds. This project helps to advance the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture**, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Partners in Flight, and North American Waterbird Conservation Plan.

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### **Manchac Wildlife Management Area Prairie Shoreline Protection Project**

This project is located in **St. John the Baptist Parish** in Louisiana's **Congressional District 3**. The 8,325-acre Manchac Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is part of a broad strip of wetlands that separates Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas. The shoreline and breakwaters are the wetlands' only barriers against saltwater intrusion from brackish Lake Pontchartrain. However, an estimated 18 feet of shoreline have already slipped into the lake since 1970. Without intervention efforts and stabilization, the shoreline will eventually completely breach, connecting the fresh-to-intermediate marsh with Lake Pontchartrain.

Partners will use their **\$1,000,000** grant to restore the WMA's 8,325 acres of coastal marsh habitats, including emergent wetlands, forested wetlands, estuarine intertidal aquatic bed, and estuarine intertidal vegetated wetlands. Partners will fill and repair 1,950 feet of gaps in the breakwater along the shoreline and cap 5,550 feet of the entire breakwater length. The result will be a continuous rock jetty in front of a portion of the WMA, known as "The Prairie," offering long-term protection against saltwater intrusion to the marsh. Over time, sediment will build up behind the jetty, stabilizing the shoreline and promoting natural revegetation. The project is further enriched by the donation of a 62,500-acre tract on Lake Maurepas' south shore by the Richard King Mellon Foundation (Foundation) to the State, bringing the total area affected by this project to **70,825 acres**.

Migratory waterfowl species in the **Mississippi Flyway** and resident mottled ducks are among 163 species of birds to benefit from the restored habitat in the project area. The public will enjoy year-round access to the WMA for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and swamp tours. Project partners include Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Foundation, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and Southeastern Louisiana University. They are matching grant funds with **\$2,293,595** to meet their project's goals, as well as those of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Gulf Coast Joint Venture**, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Partners in Flight, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, and Coast 2050: Toward a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana.

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### **Maurepas/Pontchartrain Habitat Conservation Effort Phase I Project**

This project is located in Louisiana's **St. John The Baptist Parish** in **Congressional District 3**. Louisiana's coastal habitat faces the threat of persistent development to accommodate an increasing human population. Project partners identified an approximately 14,000-acre tract of unfragmented coastal

marsh, known as the Martin Tract, that provides a haven for migratory birds and needs to be protected. In Phase I, partners will acquire half of this tract, or approximately 7,000 acres. The property forms the peninsula between Lake Maurepas, a freshwater system, and the brackish Lake Pontchartrain. It is adjacent to the 62,500-acre Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area (WMA) donated to the State by the Richard King Mellon Foundation (Foundation), and provides a critical link between this WMA and the Manchac WMA.

The property is composed of open coastal swamp with patches of bottomland cypress/tupelo forests—a mix of habitats that provides important stopover, nesting, wintering, and feeding grounds for **Mississippi Flyway** migratory waterfowl and songbirds. A number of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species, including some that are endangered or threatened such as Louisiana black bear, use the project area and will likewise benefit from partners' efforts. Acquired project lands will be open to the public for uses that are compatible with and appropriate for a state wildlife management area.

Partners, who are matching the **\$1,000,000** grant they received with **\$2,300,000**, include the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (Department), the Foundation, and The Conservation Fund. The Department is contributing an additional **\$800,000** in nonmatching funds. This project helps to advance the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Gulf Coast Joint Venture**, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Partners in Flight, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, and Coast 2050: Toward a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana.

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### **Restoration and Expansion of Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge Phase I Project**

This project is located in **LaSalle and Catahoula Parishes** in Louisiana's **Congressional District 5**. Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge was established for the benefit of the **Mississippi Flyway's** wintering migratory waterfowl and has supported peak populations averaging 90,000 ducks over the last 5 years. In 2001, The Conservation Fund (Fund) split its 18,372-acre tract, known as Bushley Bayou, into two parts, transferring 8,115 acres to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for inclusion into the refuge and conveying the other 10,257 acres to American Electric Power (AEP) for restoration. An agreement has allowed the Service to manage AEP's land as part of the refuge.

In Phase I, partners will use their **\$1,000,000 grant** to acquire 3,189 acres of the AEP's restored lands for inclusion into the refuge. The AEP is donating another 1,939 acres of its land to the refuge to help further the refuge's expansion. A total of 4,893 acres of forested wetland habitat on these acquired or donated lands in the project area have been restored. Within the 8,115 acres that the Fund transferred to the Service, 1,282 acres were a donation and are included in this project. In total, partners are affecting **6,410 acres** of habitat.

Partners are contributing **\$2,228,108** in matching funds. Their project helps to advance the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture**, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and Partners in Flight. Habitat protection and restoration will benefit a myriad of migratory birds, especially the federally listed bald eagle. The public will benefit from having additional refuge land on which to hunt, fish, and recreate where appropriate, given the needs of wildlife.

*For more information about this project, contact Andrew Hammond, Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge Manager, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (318) 992-5261, andrew\_hammond@fws.gov, or David Buie, Standard Grants Program Proposal Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (301) 497-5870, david\_buie@fws.gov.*