

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

North Dakota Partnerships Receive \$1,774,748 for Wetlands Projects

On September 8, 2004, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, as authorized under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, approved **\$1,774,748** in funding for **two projects** in **North Dakota**. 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. The projects' partnerships exceeded the required match with a total of **\$2,302,217** and added a total of **\$1,495,891** more in nonmatching funds.

Chase Lake Area Wetland Phase VI Project

The overall goals of this multiphase project, located in **11 counties** in North Dakota, are to protect 494,000 acres of wetlands and 400,000 acres of native prairie, restore 55,000 acres of grassland habitat, restore/create 29,300 acres of wetlands, and enhance 419,2000 acres of native prairie with managed rotational grazing systems.

These conservation objectives are driven by the waterfowl production goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Prairie Pothole Joint Venture**. The partners have used geographic information system technology and the *Multi-Agency Approach to Planning and Evaluation* modeling process to target sites and achieve cost-effective conservation.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has protected many of the project area's wetland complexes through the purchase of perpetual easements; however, much of the surrounding prairie uplands have been converted to agricultural use. Protecting the project area's remaining wetlands/associated uplands is crucial for **Central Flyway** migratory birds. The dense concentration of nests in the remaining uplands cover has generated high predator success rates. The result? Nest-success rates have dropped below levels needed to maintain populations.

In this phase of the project, partners will acquire 310 acres of wetlands and uplands in fee title and 40,276 acres in easements or leases. They will restore 113 acres and enhance 21,570 acres of these habitats and will create 134 acres of wetlands, all to benefit migratory birds.

The project's public lands will be open to activities such as hunting, trapping, birding, hiking, photography, and environmental education. Private-land projects will be open to the public at the owners' discretion. Ancillary benefits to local communities include flood and erosion control, water-quality maintenance, ecotourism, and economic diversity.

Project partners include North Dakota Game and Fish Department, North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., The Nature Conservancy, Blair Bechtle, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Frank Werlinger, Monte Fast, Michael Harris, Ted Anderson, Cleo Boschee,

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Russ Schumacher, Loren Muller, Ladd Erickson, Nick Goven, Don Scheeler, Jacob Schaffer, Steve Krentz, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The partnership received a **\$1,000,000** grant to which it added **\$1,517,293** in matching funds and **\$128,475** in nonmatching funds.

For more information about this project, contact Kevin Willis, State Private Lands Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (701) 355-8526, kevin_willis@fws.gov, or David Buie, Standard Grants Program Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (301) 497-5870, david_buie@fws.gov.

Missouri/Yellowstone River Confluence Land Acquisition Phase I Project

This project is located in North Dakota's **McKenzie County** at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, a place of outstanding wildlife value, scenic beauty, and historical importance. Here, partners will acquire two parcels totaling 1,523 acres through fee-title purchase and donation, protecting two of the largest remaining blocks of Missouri River bottom woodlands in the State. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service will acquire 30-year easements on these lands through its Wetland Reserve Program, using \$1,000,000 specifically allocated for these properties. Irrigated croplands will be retired and 431 acres of habitat will be restored.

The tracts' more than 200 acres of wetlands and backwater bays, old river oxbows, slow-current areas behind sandbars, and sharp river bends provide excellent bird nesting, brood-rearing, and loafing habitat. Seventy-five **Central Flyway** species, including at least 13 duck species, breed in Missouri River bottom habitats. Resident game birds such as wild turkey, ring-necked pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, and gray partridge are common to abundant in the confluence area. Federally listed threatened and endangered species benefit, too. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *Piping Plover Recovery Plan* designates the confluence as Critical Habitat for this threatened species. The endangered interior least tern nests on river sandbars. Bald eagles frequent the project area during spring and fall migration, and a small population winters there.

The Missouri River, upstream of the confluence, is regulated by Fort Peck Dam, which results in flows that are relatively clean, clear, and cool. The unregulated flows of the Yellowstone create a warm, turbid, and unique environment for one of the last strongholds of endangered pallid sturgeon and for sicklefin and sturgeon chub (listed as endangered by the Dakota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society). The Service designated the Yellowstone River, especially at the confluence area, a Recovery Priority Area for the pallid sturgeon.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will ultimately own and manage the acquired lands as state wildlife management areas. The public will have access for fishing, hunting, hiking, birding, historic interpretation, public education, and research.

Partners making all this possible include North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, American Foundation for Wildlife, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Ochs Brothers, Tim Neu, The Conservation Fund, Upper Missouri United Sportsmen, Friends of Fort Union, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., North Dakota Game Warden Association, Pheasants Forever, Inc., Delta Waterfowl Foundation, North Dakota National Wild Turkey Federation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and **Northern Great Plains Joint Venture**. The partnership received a **\$774,748 grant**, which it matched with **\$784,924**. Another **\$1,367,416** was added in nonmatching funds.

For more information about this project, contact Keith Trego, Executive Director, North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, (701) 223-8501, nrtheith@btinet.net, or David Buie, Standard Grants Program Proposal Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (301) 497-5870, david_buie@fws.gov.