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# News Release

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**Secretary Kempthorne Announces \$26 Million for Wetlands Grants,  
\$4.1 Million for Refuge Acquisitions**  
*New Video Regarding Migratory Bird Conservation Commission Achievements  
Released*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced today that the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has approved more than \$26 million in funding to protect and restore more than 135,000 acres of U.S. wetland areas and wildlife habitats under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

Chaired by Secretary Kempthorne, the commission also approved \$4.1 million in funding to add more than 4,400 other wetland acres to seven national wildlife refuges. Secretary Kempthorne released a video today on the commission's accomplishments, which can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/realty/mbcc.html>.

The commission includes Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, Representatives John Dingell of Michigan and Wayne Gilchrest of Maryland, Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen L. Johnson, as well as state representatives serving as ex officio members who vote on projects located within their respective states.

"I'm proud that the Migratory Bird Commission has approved this funding to help wetlands conservation projects and wildlife habitats across the country," Secretary Kempthorne said.

The NAWCA grants will support 27 projects in 20 states. As an example of the kind of projects awarded grants, Kempthorne pointed to a \$1-million grant to restore thousands of wetland acres in Montana as part of the Blackfoot Challenge Initiative, which is a cooperative conservation partnership that has been recognized by the Department of the Interior.

“The landowners and other partners working on the conservation of the Blackfoot River have proven themselves outstanding environmental stewards of the entire Blackfoot River Valley watershed,” said Kempthorne.

The grants were awarded under NAWCA’s U.S. Standard Grants Program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the Department of the Interior. Partners in these projects will contribute an additional \$86 million in matching funds to help support these conservation effects. The grants are funded by annual Congressional appropriations; fines, penalties and forfeitures levied under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; interest accrued on funds under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and excise taxes paid on small engine fuels through the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Fund.

Three NAWCA projects funded by the commission will be carried out on Fish and Wildlife Service Wetlands Management Districts in the Prairie Pothole Region of the Upper Midwest. These projects, two in Montana and one in Minnesota, highlight the strong connection between NAWCA and the Service’s Small Wetlands Program, which uses Federal Duck Stamp dollars to acquire wetlands and uplands to be managed as part of the system of Wetland Management Districts scattered throughout the Midwest. The Small Wetlands Program is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, capping a successful half-century of wetland conservation.

Among the wetlands that will be acquired in national wildlife refuges are 2,027 acres for the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge in St. Bernard and Orleans Parishes, LA. By permanently protecting these coastal wetlands, this addition will conserve critical marsh habitat for migratory waterfowl species including gadwall, northern pintail and mallard in addition to providing storm surge protection to inland areas.

The commission's approval also secured funding to add feeding, breeding, and resting habitat to six other national wildlife refuges. These approved projects include:

- **Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge, Georgetown, Marion and Horry Counties, South Carolina** – Acquisition of 1,292 acres to protect and manage a diversity of habitats for waterfowl, with a focus on the American black duck; and conserve wetlands and provide opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreational activities.
- **Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Seneca County, New York** – Acquisition of 64 acres that provide important feeding and nesting habitat for migrating,

wintering, and breeding waterfowl such as mallard, canvasback, lesser scaup, and ring-necked ducks.

- **Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, Mohawk River and Pondicherry Divisions, Coos County, New Hampshire**– Acquisition of 108 and 105 acres, respectively, to conserve and protect important migratory waterfowl habitat, with special consideration to the American black duck.
- **Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge, Liberty County, Texas**– Acquisition of 924 acres to protect important wetland habitats benefiting migrating, over-wintering, and breeding waterfowl including wood duck, mallard, gadwall, American widgeon, green- and blue-winged teal, and lesser scaup.
- **Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, Jackson, Prairie, Woodruff and Monroe Counties, Arkansas** – Acquisition of 24 acres protecting wintering areas vital to the long-term conservation of migratory waterfowl including mallard, northern pintail, teal, and Canada goose.
- **Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, Wapato Lake Unit, Washington and Yamhill Counties, Oregon** – Acquisition of 15 acres to manage as a migration and wintering area for waterfowl, especially for tundra swans.

Secretary Kempthorne also recognized another major milestone event at the commission's latest meeting on Sept. 9--the application of the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund's billionth dollar for on-the-ground conservation. The billionth dollar was used to complete the purchase of a permanent conservation easement on private land in Campbell County in north-central South Dakota. This expenditure marks a major milestone in the ongoing effort by the Fish and Wildlife Service and its public and private partners to permanently protect important migratory bird habitat across the nation.

More information about NAWCA grant programs and summaries of the projects is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/index.shtm>.

Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne provides introduction to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission video at: <http://www.fws.gov/video/FLASH/mbccfull.html>.