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News Release



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Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Addition Approved

As part of a suite of wetlands acquisitions, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission today approved the addition of 15 acres to the Wapato Lake Unit of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) near Sherwood, Oregon.

The addition will provide habitat for a variety of waterfowl species, including the tundra swan, five important duck species (mallard, northern pintail, canvasback, ring-necked duck and lesser scaup), and six varieties of Canada geese (dusky, lesser, Taverner, cackling, western and Aleutian). The Wapato Lake Unit is located near the community of Gaston in the northwest corner of the Willamette Valley. The 15-acre addition is located in Washington and Yamhill counties.

The Commission awarded a grant of \$54,000 for the 15 acres.

“This addition continues a new chapter in the history of wildlife conservation for the Willamette Valley and the state of Oregon,” said Refuge Manager Ralph Webber. “The addition is good news for the new refuge unit as we begin to ramp up an acquisition program, setting the stage for habitat restoration in the near future.”

The Tualatin River NWR addition is one of seven refuge additions in the nation, comprising 4,440 wetland acres, approved in September by the Commission, which is chaired by Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne and comprised of members of Congress and federal cabinet secretaries.

Nationwide, more than \$26 million in federal funding was approved to protect, restore, enhance and manage more than 135,000 acres of vital wetland areas and associated wildlife habitats across the United States. To date, the Commission has awarded \$1 billion for on-the-ground conservation.

“The purchase of these lands symbolizes the tremendous investment our nation’s sportsmen and women have put into conservation through their purchase of Federal Duck stamps and the taxes on firearms and ammunition,” said Secretary Kempthorne. “Their contribution helps ensure the songs and sounds of waterfowl and other wetland-dependent wildlife will be enjoyed by all Americans for years to come.”

The 15-acre parcel at Tualatin River NWR builds on another 180 acres that was approved by the Commission earlier this year. This addition is another step towards adding to lands within the 4,310-acre approved acquisition

boundary of the Wapato Lake Unit. The refuge's Wapato Lake Unit supports wetlands, meadow prairies and a riverine complex of bottomland forest, which are all considered imperiled wildlife habitats of the Willamette Valley. Unique organic peat soils of the lake bed support a relic shrub wetland community fringed by Oregon ash and dense stands of wapato in the upper marsh, an important food source for tundra swans. "As a result of its historical and continued importance to swans and other wintering waterfowl, the Service has been interested in conserving this area for years," Webber said.

In late 2000, a large number of local landowners petitioned the Service to establish the unit as a national wildlife refuge and formal approval by the agency occurred in early 2007. The purchase of tracts within the established refuge unit will protect and conserve imperiled habitats supporting regionally and nationally important wildlife species including waterfowl, shorebirds and marshbirds, federally listed anadromous fish, raptors and breeding species of neo-tropical migratory birds.

"Plans to protect and conserve this regional and national resource could not have happened without the tremendous support received from local landowners and the community at large," Webber said.

Other national wildlife refuge acquisitions approved today by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission included: Bayou Sauvage NWR in Louisiana; Waccamaw NWR in South Carolina; Montezuma NWR in New York; Silvio O. Conte NWR in New Hampshire; Trinity River NWR in Texas; and Cache River NWR in Arkansas.

More information about the grants and summaries of the projects approved today is available on the Web at: <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/index.shtm>.

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