

## NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
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**Secretary Salazar Announces \$26 Million for Wetlands Grants, Nearly \$12 Million for Refuge Acquisitions Benefiting Migratory Waterfowl**

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today that the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has approved more than \$26 million in funding to protect and restore more than 200,000 acres of wetland areas and wildlife habitat in the U.S. and Mexico under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). The commission, which is chaired by Secretary Salazar, also approved \$11.5 million to protect more than 3,500 wetland acres on seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The commission includes Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, Representative John Dingell of Michigan, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, as well as state representatives serving as ex officio members who vote on projects located within their respective states.

“It is an honor to preside over a program that for nearly eight decades has secured hundreds of thousands of acres of wetland habitat throughout North America for migratory birds,” Secretary Salazar said. “The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission is about common-sense conservation, protecting wetlands critical to birds throughout their nesting, wintering, and migratory ranges irrespective of state and international borders that may intersect the flyways.”

More than \$24.2 million of NAWCA grant funds will support 25 projects in 21 states and Puerto Rico, with partners contributing an additional \$60.6 million in matching funds to help protect, restore and enhance almost 185,000 acres. Nearly \$2 million for seven projects will help protect 85,427 acres of habitat in Mexico, with partners contributing an additional \$3.5 million the projects. The grants were awarded under NAWCA’s U.S. Standard Grants and Mexico Grants Programs administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the Department of the Interior. 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.

**In Colorado, the San Luis Valley Wetland Project** will receive \$1million in grant money and \$2.3 million in matching funds to restore, protect and enhance wetland, riparian and playa habitats benefitting numerous waterfowl species, including mallards, northern pintail, redheads, ring-necked ducks, American wigeon, canvasback and many species of wetland dependent birds such as Wilsons warbler, western wood-pewee, greater sandhill crane, American bittern, white-faced ibis and American avocet.

Project areas are located in Alamosa, Rio Grande, Saguache, Conejos and Costilla Counties, Colorado.

**The Platte River Wetlands Partnership** will receive \$1million in grant money, \$2.1million in matching funds, and \$943,000 in non-matching funds.

The primary purpose of this project is to conserve wetland habitats in the Platte River Basin to benefit wetland-dependent migratory birds. The objectives of this project are to restore, establish, enhance and protect a variety of wetland types and associated uplands. Approximately 2 million ducks and 500,000 geese use the project area, primarily during migration and wintering periods, most numerously mallards, Canada geese, northern pintails, American wigeon and green-winged teal. Local nesting waterfowl species include mallard and wood duck. Shorebirds and wading birds are also heavily dependent on Platte River habitats. Over three-quarters of all bird species found in the area use wetland habitats sometime throughout the year.

Project area includes Weld, Morgan, Logan and Sedgwick Counties in Colorado; Garden, Keith, Lincoln, Merrill and Scotts Bluff Counties in Nebraska; and Goshen County in Wyoming.

**The Rainwater Basin Habitat Conservation Project** encompassing 17 counties in Nebraska will receive a \$1 million grant, \$1 million in matching funds, and \$122,000 in non-matching funds. Originally containing more than 11,000 wetlands, the region has experienced widespread wetland drainage and plowing of native prairie. This conservation project will restore, enhance and protect wetlands that provide important spring migration habitat to millions of migratory birds in the Central Flyway. In total, several million waterfowl stop in the Rainwater Basin each spring, resting and rebuilding fat and nutrient reserves lost during migration.

It is estimated that 50 percent of the continental mallard population and 30 percent of the continental pintail population use Rainwater Basin wetlands each year.

**The Glaciated Valleys of Northwest Montana Project** will receive a \$1 million grant, \$2.8 million in matching funds, and \$2.8 million in non-matching funds as part of a multi-phase, landscape-scale effort to protect wetlands and associated fish and wildlife habitat in northwestern Montana. These areas, surrounding Flathead Lake, are known for their bird diversity, importance to migratory waterfowl and associated rivers, lakes, sloughs and ponds that attract many bird species.

Within the project area, the Flathead and Mission valleys support one of the highest levels of bird diversity in the lower 48 states. This proposal aims to permanently protect 1,169 acres and restore, enhance and temporarily protect an additional 986 acres of significant wetland complexes and riparian areas that are highly important to threatened species, species of special concern, migratory birds, other important fish and wildlife resources, and outdoor recreation. The project area still contains significant opportunities to protect wildlife habitat in the face of rapid conversion to subdivisions. The project encompasses Flathead, Lake, and Sanders Counties in Montana.

**The North Dakota Drift Prairie Project** encompassing 22 counties in North Dakota will receive a \$1 million grant, \$1 million in matching funds, and \$97,000 in non-matching funds to continue an ongoing implementation plan designed to protect, restore and enhance wetland/grassland communities. The project will secure 2,973 acres by perpetual conservation easements, acquire leases on 19,307 acres, restore 305 acres and enhance 5,464 acres. This project will exclusively target palustrine emergent wetlands and the adjacent uplands, which are critically important migration, breeding and nesting habitat for many waterfowl and wetland-dependant species.

**The South Dakota Threatened Habitats Project** encompassing 21 counties in the Prairie Pothole region of South Dakota will receive a \$770,000 grant, \$1.6 million in matching funds, and \$27 million in non-matching funds.

This project represents a continued effort to accelerate protection of this threatened landscape by working primarily with family ranchers to ensure a sustainable future. A diverse coalition will develop an integrated suite of wetland and grassland conservation tools that will be implemented to benefit the grasslands needed by ranchers as well as the vital landscape attributes needed by prairie birds. Matching partner contributions will be combined with grant funds to restore, establish and enhance wetlands and grasslands. This habitat will not only provide direct benefits to more than 7,000 breeding duck pairs, but will also afford critical conservation benefits to the full spectrum of native bird communities dependent on the rapidly disappearing native grasslands and wetlands of central South Dakota. For example, restored and enhanced tracts will provide direct breeding habitat benefits to an estimated 475 willet pairs, 440 marbled godwit pairs, 210 pairs of Sprague's pipits, 135 pairs of Baird's sparrows and 2,730 pairs of chestnut-collared longspurs.

The commission also approved acquisitions that will be added to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge System to secure breeding, resting and feeding habitat. These acquisitions are funded with proceeds from sales of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, otherwise known as the Federal Duck Stamps. These acquisitions include:

- **Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, Camden, Gates and Pasquotank Counties, North Carolina** – Acquisition of 51 acres to protect, restore and maintain habitat for breeding, migrating and wintering waterfowl.

- **San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, Brazoria and Matagorda Counties, Texas** – Acquisition of 1,454 acres to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl species, including mallard, gadwall, and northern pintail.
- **Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, Pondicherry Divisions, Coos County, New Hampshire** – Acquisition of 80 acres to preserve and protect important migratory waterfowl habitat, and provide feeding, nesting and resting habitat.
- **Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge, Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes, Louisiana** – Acquisition of 265 acres to protect and enhance seasonally and permanently flooded wetlands for migrating and wintering waterfowl.
- **Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, Wapato Lake Unit, Washington and Yamhill Counties, Oregon** – Acquisition of 225 acres to manage as a migration and wintering area for waterfowl, especially tundra swans.
- **North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area, Colusa County, California** – Acquisition of 388 acres to protect, restore, and maintain wetlands for waterfowl and other migratory birds.
- **Grasslands Wildlife Management Area, Merced County, California** – A permanent easement of 1,077 acres protecting and enhancing a major wintering area for migratory waterfowl.

This year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1934 amendment to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that created the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the Duck Stamp. For every dollar spend on Federal Duck Stamps, ninety-eight cents goes directly to purchase vital habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The [Migratory Bird Conservation Commission](#) oversees the use of Federal Duck Stamp funds for the purchase and lease of these wetland habitats for national wildlife refuges. To date, more than 5 million acres of wetlands have been purchased using more than \$650 million in Duck Stamp revenue.

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

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

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