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Executive Summary

Team DU is banding together for waterfowl to conserve, restore and manage wetland and grassland habitat for generations to come. Don't believe it? Take a look around. Our dedicated volunteers and supporters are working for the ducks and spreading the word like never before.

Fiscal Year 2015 was a productive and successful year for Ducks Unlimited with total revenues exceeding \$225 million. More than 55,000 volunteers gave their time and talents to the organization, and the result was impressive. DU events drew more than a half million supporters and raised \$56 million in net proceeds. That means 4 percent growth in revenue and 8 percent growth in attendance. And it's all because of dedicated volunteers and generous supporters like you.

In January 2015, DU celebrated the successful conservation of more than 5 million acres of vital waterfowl habitat in the United States. It was a conservation milestone 30 years in the making. These acres are habitat that Ducks Unlimited, with our many partners, has protected, restored, enhanced or managed for waterfowl. This milestone would not have been possible without the continued help and support of our agency, corporate and volunteer partners.

In FY15, DU conserved more than 245,000 acres in the United States, adding to the growing continental number of 13.6 million acres since 1937 in the United States, Canada and Mexico, thanks to the contributions of Ducks Unlimited's volunteers and supporters.

And these conservation investments are paying dividends. The 2015 Trends in Duck Breeding Populations report released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated another strong year. Overall, breeding duck numbers continue to hover in record territory with the breeding waterfowl survey recording an estimated 49.5 million ducks.

Over the past six years, Bass Pro Shops Founder and CEO Johnny Morris and the entire Bass Pro Shops team have contributed greatly to DU's wetlands conservation efforts. From designating October as "DU Month" at all retail locations to giving Ducks Unlimited a major presence on the NASCAR circuit, Bass Pro Shops' support is impressive and inspiring. And that support continued in a gigantic way in FY15.

The 4,600-square-foot Ducks Unlimited Waterfowling Heritage Center inside Bass Pro Shops at the Memphis Pyramid has welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors since opening its doors April 29, 2015. The center is achieving our goal of educating visitors about DU's vision and mission, and with the DU Waterfowling Heritage Center logo now gracing the south side of the Pyramid, this partnership is a tremendous boost to public awareness of our brand and mission.

Our staff and volunteers also worked hard to educate elected officials in Washington, D.C., and articulated the value of the Duck Stamp Act of 2014, which increased the cost of the federal duck stamp from \$15 to \$25. The additional \$10 to \$15 million per year will conserve critical waterfowl habitat and help ensure the future of our waterfowling traditions. Since the stamp's introduction in 1934, the program has raised more than \$800 million and has conserved more than 6.5 million acres of waterfowl habitat.

Because the need for wetlands conservation is great and the threats to waterfowl habitat are growing, DU launched the public phase of its ambitious *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign at our national convention in Milwaukee. Funds raised through *Rescue Our Wetlands* will allow Ducks Unlimited to protect more of North America's most vital landscapes for waterfowl. This is the largest wetlands and waterfowl conservation campaign in history, and we are confident our volunteers and supporters will help us exceed our \$2 billion campaign goal. You'll read much more about campaign details on the following pages.

It has been a great year for conservation. We want to thank each and every one of you for your continued commitment to the Ducks Unlimited mission.

Paul Bonderson Jr.

DALLA.

H. Dale Hall

of Dale Hall



Rescue Our Wetlands

Since 1937, Ducks Unlimited has worked across North America to ensure a strong future for waterfowl, waterfowlers and others who appreciate waterfowl and the wetlands resources that benefit us all. To ensure this future, Ducks Unlimited has embarked on a bold new campaign to address the very real threats waterfowl and wetlands face today.

Rescue Our Wetlands, Ducks Unlimited's ambitious new campaign to raise \$2 billion for vital wetlands conservation through 2018, is the solution to these threats. Wetlands are nature's life-

blood, yet the connections between wetlands, wildlife and people are becoming increasingly fragile as conflicts between conservation, development and other demands on our natural resources occur more frequently and critical wetland habitat continues to be lost each and every day. Now is the time to act – right now is our best opportunity to make a difference.

Rarely have DU supporters had the opportunity to make a larger, more lasting impact at such a crucial moment in history. Rescue Our Wetlands focuses on five key priorities – that are critical to the future of wetlands and waterfowl.

The campaign priority at the very heart of Rescue Our

Wetlands is Waterfowl Forever, which recognizes that all DU members and supporters contribute directly to the success of the campaign and play a vital role in wetlands and waterfowl conservation.

The Breeding Landscapes priority of *Rescue Our Wetlands* will protect and restore North America's most important waterfowl

breeding habitats.

Through the campaign's Wintering and Migration Landscapes priority, DU will protect and restore vital waterfowl wintering and staging habitats.

The Conservation Legacy campaign priority will recognize endowment gifts and planned gift commitments, providing a more secure future for DU and its conservation work.

Finally, the Conservation Education campaign priority is dedicated to informing the public about the importance of wetlands and associated habitats.

Each of these campaign priorities has specific, ambitious, and continental-scale goals that will only be achieved by all three Ducks Unlimited organizations working together to ensure the success of *Rescue Our Wetlands*.



Rarely have DU supporters had the opportunity

to make a larger, more lasting impact at such a

crucial moment in history.

Breeding Landscapes

Goal: \$300 Million

The prairie potholes of the north-central United States and Canada are among the most critical waterfowl breeding habitats in the world, but prairie landscapes continue to lose wetlands and adjacent grasslands at an alarming rate. In some years, up to two-thirds of breeding ducks settle in this region known as the "duck factory." Unfortunately, these wetlands, like those in the Boreal Forest, are also among the most threatened.

The Breeding Landscapes component of Rescue Our Wetlands will protect and restore crucial breeding habitat across the continent.

Some 14 million waterfowl and a multitude of other migratory birds breed in Canada's vast Boreal Forest, and more than half of the continent's waterfowl can be found in the Boreal Forest's 1.6 billion-acres during late summer. However, this productive and wetland-rich forest region faces increasing pressure due primarily to energy exploration and extraction, forestry and agriculture.

The Breeding Landscapes component of *Rescue Our Wetlands* will protect and restore crucial breeding habitat across the continent, including the Prairie Pothole Region and the Boreal Forest.



photo credit: Gary Kramer





Prairie Pothole Region

Using Science And Partnerships To Conserve Irreplaceable Habitat

Ducks Unlimited has long focused on working with our conservation partners and philanthropic supporters to secure as much duck habitat as possible. We are designing and advancing new programs and public policies that work for landowners and habitat. Using the best data and cutting-edge methods, we are targeting our direct programs to the most valuable, at-risk habitat. In FY15, DU and its partner the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) protected more than 71,000 acres of habitat in the Dakotas and Montana. Despite DU's investment of \$5.9 million and the USFWS' \$42.7 million, a waiting list of 1,500 interested landowners remains.

Going forward, we will need to be even more resourceful if we expect to meet our goals through the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign. The Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) is irreplaceable for duck populations, and the threats to wetland and grassland habitat are chronic. Two-thirds of the habitat we depend on remains unprotected and at risk of loss or degradation.

Through our **Preserve Our Prairies Initiative** Ducks Unlimited is working to broaden support for prairie wetland and grassland conservation. Fortunately, there is growing recognition of the benefits provided to society by wetlands and grassland, including clean water, flood control, carbon storage and habitat for pollinators. We are seizing this opportunity to attract a broader suite of supporters by working on new science and developing partnerships with foundations and corporations to help fund our mission in the prairies.

If Ducks Unlimited and The North American Waterfowl Management Plan are to succeed in conserving waterfowl and migratory birds in North America, we must conserve the PPR. With your help, we can deliver the science, the programs, and the public policies needed to ensure future generations can enjoy the bounty of the prairie.



The Prairie Pothole Region is irreplaceable for duck populations, and the threats to wetland and grassland habitat are chronic.



2015 Annual Report Rescue Our Wetlands

Rescuing Wetlands And Feeling Good About It

Jaxon Lang had the tragedy of wetland drainage impressed upon him from his mom and dad, Andy and Louise Lang, who grew up near Erdahl, Minn., and witnessed the conversion from a diverse prairie pothole landscape rich with biodiversity to fields dominated by corn and soybeans.

In 2009, Jaxon and his wife, Allison, began supporting Duck Unlimited's **Living Lakes Initiative** and helped enhance Lake Christina through long-time family friend, John Lindquist. The couple's first philanthropic gift set the course for their long-term President's Council level support.

"DU has proven to be the best mechanism to preserve ecosystems important to our family, as well as influence positive change," Jaxon said. "Perhaps because I am an avid duck hunter, I recognize that ducks are the canary in the coal mine. If you have ducks, you also have clean water and intact ecosystems."

Jaxon and Allison still support the Prairie Pothole Region through the **Preserve Our Prairies Initiative**. "Allison and I have a



Jaxon and Daisy Lang pose with Daisy's first duck.

commitment to conservation," Jaxon said. "We cherish the landscape while we are here. Hopefully we'll enjoy a few duck hunts and ultimately feel good that we are passing it on to future generations. If we won't help, who will?"

DU Protects South Dakota Prairie Pothole Habitat Sold At Auction

The bidding was fierce, dragging on for more than four hours. A lot was at stake at the auction attended by more than 60 people: the almost 3,000-acre Paula Hall Trust property near Miller, S.D. The entire ranch was still intact, native prairie dotted with hundreds of small, shallow wetlands, but none of it protected by conservation easements.

In the end, DU was able to acquire three of the 12 parcels auctioned that day, a total of 637 acres. All three had been marked as top priorities for protection because of their extensive waterfowl habitat. A neighboring rancher acquired another of DU's highest priority parcels, and we have successfully worked with the landowner to permanently protect that 240-acre tract.

Unfortunately, the majority of the balance of the ranch sold that day was plowed and converted to row crop agriculture.

The ever-growing rate of conversion of grassland to cropland and the loss of wetlands are real threats to habitat for waterfowl, pheasants and many other species. DU continues to pursue many options to protect remaining grasslands and wetlands within the Prairie Pothole Region, including securing conservation easements from private landowners.

DU has already placed a conservation easement on the three parcels acquired at the auction. A few months ago, DU sold that property to a local rancher who was interested in adding that grassland to his operation. Livestock grazing in prairie grasslands and waterfowl production are very compatible goals in the Prairie Pothole Region. DU has already reinvested revenue from that sale into an additional acquisition under the Revolving Habitat Program, purchasing lands and then selling them back to producers with a conservation easement placed on the title.

Prairie Pothole Region Research Programs Expanding

Imagine two people trying to watch footage from 11 video cameras filming 24 hours a day throughout the summer. That was the task of interns this past summer on Ducks Unlimited's new nest cam project at the Coteau Ranch, near Bismarck, N.D. The results of this new research are helping people around the world connect with DU and understand the importance of wetlands and grasslands to waterfowl.

DU is partnering with the University of North Dakota to add ducks to UND's Wildlife@Home project, which gives citizens the opportunity to participate in scientific research. Volunteers are helping review thousands of hours of duck nesting video that would take interns years to analyze without the volunteer citizen scientists. Edited video can be viewed at ducks.org/nestcam2015.

Another, larger DU research crew spent the summer surveying duck pairs and broods in the Bakken oil production area that covers a third of the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR).

"We are studying this area because we know nothing about how oil- and gas-related infrastructure may affect waterfowl production in the most important habitat for breeding ducks," said Tanner Gue, DU research scientist.

DU's research in the Bakken began with a pilot brood survey in 2014. They expanded the survey parameters this summer to include more brood study plots and a breeding-pairs survey. More information is available at ducks.org/PPRresearch. Work on these projects will continue for several years.

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Steve Adair, director of operations for DU's Great Plains Region, explains the value of wetlands to sophomore biology students.



A Bismarck high school student and the prairie bugs she collected during a field trip to DU's Coteau Ranch.



Research technicians prepare for a day surveying duck pairs in the Bakken oil field of the Prairie Pothole Region.



Bismarck biology students come each year to DU's Coteau Ranch for a field trip to learn about prairie and wetland ecology.

2015.Annual Report Rescue Our Wetlands

North America's Boreal Forest

Conserving one of the earth's most valuable waterfowl breeding grounds



North America's Boreal Forest is the world's largest remaining intact, productive ecosystem, encompassing more than 1.6 billion acres of unspoiled marshes, lakes, bogs, wetlands, streams and rivers. Twenty-six species of waterfowl nest and migrate through the Boreal Forest and, on average, 35 percent of North America's waterfowl breed in this vast landscape. Boreal habitat is especially important for scaup, ring-necked ducks, buffleheads, green-winged teal and American wigeon, as well as a third of the continent's mallards and northern pintails. An estimated three to five billion birds fly south from what is often called the Northern Bird Nursery each fall.

North America's Boreal Forest is also the world's largest reservoir of surface water and most extensive terrestrial carbon sink. Absorbing more carbon from the atmosphere than it releases, the region helps regulate our planet's climate. a consortium of progressive indigenous people, industries, conservation organizations, and governments in partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts, continue to pursue a 50/50 mix of protection and sustainable development so waterfowl and other wildlife will not be forced to survive on small fragments of remaining habitat. Through the **Boreal Forest Initiative**, these stakeholders take on the needs of a growing world population while ensuring natural resources remain plentiful.

Thirty five percent of North
America's waterfowl breed in
this landscape. Boreal habitat is
especially important for scaup,
ring-necked ducks, buffleheads,
green-winged teal and
American wigeon.



Boreal and Arctic Campaign Success Continues

The Boreal and Arctic Campaign closed its 15th year in 2015 and celebrated the second year of a 10-year, double-down partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts and Hewlett Foundation to jointly raise at least \$70 million to fund Pew's

International Boreal Conservation Campaign (IBCC).

Thanks to a \$50 million commitment (increased \$10 million from FY14) from Pew, with support from the Hewlett Foundation and other partners, and a \$20 million commitment by Ducks Unlimited and DU Canada via the Boreal Forest Initiative (with \$6.4 million already pledged), at least 1 billion acres of the Boreal Forest will be conserved by the end

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of 2022. At least 50 percent of remaining forested acres will be designated or committed towards new refuges, parks or natural areas. Development on the remaining 50 percent will be subject to new, stricter sustainability and wetland protection standards.

The partnership allowed Ducks Unlimited to apply nearly

\$2.5 million in North American Wetlands Conservation
Act funds to the program in
FY15. DU and its partners also
continued to provide media and
communications support that
resulted in more than 800 stories
on Boreal conservation through
major outlets. As a result of these
incredible efforts, the IBCC
announced during FY15 that
more than 750 million acres in
the 50/50 framework had been
successfully conserved, including

new acreage in Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories.



Eric Demers Backs The Boreal Forest Initiative

"I really support Ducks Unlimited's conservation mission and the work it does," Washington State Campaign Chairman Eric Demers said. "The fact that 80 percent of the money this organization raises goes back into conservation really appeals to me. It's just a phenomenal group to be involved with."

Raised in Seattle, Demers grew up right in the middle of the northwest portion of the Pacific Flyway, where some of America's most important and threatened wetlands exist. It was an early bond with nature that sowed the seeds for future conservation work.

"I used to hunt waterfowl in Eastern Washington with my father growing up, but then stopped for a while, until my brother and I got back into it about 15 years ago," Demers said. "A few years later I attended a DU dinner with a buddy and met some neighbors who were on the committee. My DU experience took off from there."



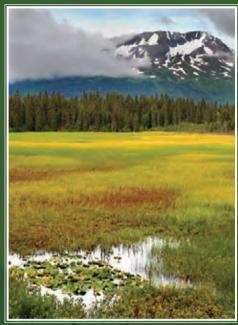
Eric and Wendi Demers

A neonatologist providing care to newborn infants by day, Demers still resides in his hometown with his wife, Wendi, who is also active within DU, and is a major supporter of **The Boreal Forest Initiative** and specific projects in Saskatchewan, near where he hunts. He is pledged as a Sponsor in Perpetuity and is already a Grand Slam Life Sponsor. Like many who have joined DU over the years, the quality of individuals working together to preserve critical habitat is a large reason Eric stays involved.

"The people with Ducks Unlimited are top notch, not just the volunteers, but also the staff that the organization hires. I was lucky enough to go to Ducks University this year and got to meet a bunch of regional directors and biologists from around the country and was really impressed with everybody. They are a fun group to be around and they all have the same kind of passion and interest in wetlands conservation."

2015 Annual Report Rescue Our Wetlands





The majority of Alaska's wetlands and Boreal Forest, a region that nurtures 15 to 20 percent of the waterfowl population in the United States, are prime brood-rearing areas for waterfowl. Unfortunately, resource development is expanding rapidly in this region, threatening critical habitat.

To help keep Alaska's pristine ecosystems intact for future generations,
Ducks Unlimited utilizes sophisticated Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
technology to map huge portions of the state's landscapes through **The Alaska Initiative** – Born to Fly. The complex maps are then used by the U.S. Forest
Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management and other federal and state partners
and non-governmental agencies to make informed land management decisions. Knowledge of the size, shape, distribution and extent of
land-cover types, when linked with information on wildlife
habitat and human activities, can vastly improve decision-mak-

Nearly 200 million acres of Alaska have been mapped by DU staff over the last 20 years to identify and protect wetlands before they require restoration. Losing Alaska's precious wetlands to encroachment, resource development and other degradation will cause irreversible harm to waterfowl populations in the West. Mapping projects to identify and help protect these

ing capabilities for natural resources managers.

wetlands require substantial funding, but the cost of the identification projects is far less than the cost of future restoration efforts or habitat losses. Ducks Unlimited's ability to continue these critical mapping efforts depends heavily on the financial support of individuals who share our commitment to wetlands, waterfowl, other wildlife and our outdoor heritage through The Alaska Initiative – Born to Fly.



Ducks Unlimited's ability to continue these critical mapping efforts depends heavily on the financial support of individuals who share our commitment to wetlands

Great Lakes Initiative

The ecosystem that makes up the **Great Lakes Initiative** is composed of inland lakes, interior marshes and coastal wetlands. This region provides critical resources for waterfowl that are migrating or settling in to breed. In FY15, more than 6,127 new acres of habitat were restored across this important area.

Horicon Marsh in southeastern Wisconsin, the largest freshwater cattail marsh in the nation, has renewed life thanks to a more than \$1.5 million investment by Ducks Unlimited and generous local support.

The ongoing restoration has enhanced more than 2,700 acres of wetlands so far. The restoration investment includes a gift of \$500,000 from the Ted and Grace Bachhuber Foundation and a \$500,000 challenge grant that 72 Ducks Unlimited Major Sponsors met in a little more than two years.



Living Lakes Initiative

Donor support for the Living Lakes Initiative funded the conservation of more than 7,378 acres in Minnesota and Iowa in FY15.

A major accomplishment was designation of the 409-acre Eagle Lake in Minnesota as the state's 50th wildlife management area. Thanks to efforts from DU and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the process of enhancing the lake for wildlife and nature enthusiasts has begun with the installation of water-control structures and fish barriers.

Other successes include the Marble-Hottes Lakes Enhancement project in Dickinson County, Iowa. DU has installed two new pumping systems that allow Iowa Department of Natural Resources managers to remove non-native fish and improve lake conditions.



Conservation Priority Area

Young Family Foundation Sets Expectations in Iowa



Travis, Rick and Mike Young

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The goal of Ducks Unlimited's Living Lakes Initiative is to establish migratory stepping stones of protected and managed shallow lakes from southern Iowa through northern Minnesota for waterfowl food and habitat.

The Young Family Foundation in Iowa recognizes the importance of this challenge and has been a major DU supporter.

"They were early funders to jump start the initiative, and were crucial to its success in Iowa," said Adam DeHaan, DU senior director of development for Iowa and Minnesota.

Rick Young, chairman of the board for the Young Family Foundation, said his organization supports natural resources causes in northeast Iowa, including conservation, recreation and education.

"Too much of the land is privately owned," Young said. "Ducks need more places to go. We felt this was an area that needed contribution."

Rick's father, Dick H. Young, started the Young Family Foundation and was a longtime DU contributor.

2015 Annual Report Rescue Our Wetlands

Ducks Unlimited Canada Ready to Rescue Our Wetlands

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), in partnership with DU, Inc. and DU de Mexico, is turning the tide with the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign. Conservation and fundraising efforts north of the 49th will focus on areas most important to breeding waterfowl. Of the campaign's \$2 billion continental goal, DUC will raise \$500 million.

The Prairie Pothole Region is priority number one. During the campaign, DUC will conserve 428,000 acres of critical habitat through land acquisitions, conservation easements and restoration. Another 3.5 million acres will be influenced through policy and other conservation efforts.

In the Boreal Forest, an abundant supply of oil, natural gas, timber and minerals has sparked a development boom. Working in tandem with governments, First Nations and industry, DUC will conserve 24.5 million acres during the campaign.

In FY15, DU Canada included 110,799 grassroots supporters and 5,289 volunteers who helped host 424 events. DUC positively influenced 127 million acres of habitat and completed 9,726 projects.

Revolving Land Conservation Program Supports Waterfowl and Rural Communities

Don Nataros first saw his grandfather's farm in southwestern Manitoba as a young boy of seven. It's a place he will always call home.

But the family eventually needed to sell the farm. While selling his grandfather's property, he found a way to achieve this important balance through Ducks Unlimited Canada's Revolving Land Conservation Program.

Through this program, DUC purchases land, restores the wetlands and grasslands, and then sells the land with a conservation easement. Proceeds from the sale then provide DUC with funds to buy additional land and continue this revolving cycle of conservation. After DUC purchased the Nataros' property, it restored 34 wetlands on the 320-acre half section. It's now called the Tufts Project, after Don's grandfather Ed Tufts.

Getting More Bang For Your Buck Tom Johnson - Shepherd, Texas



Benefactor and Grand Slam Diamond Life Sponsor Tom Johnson

Texan, landscape contractor, rancher, angler and avid traveling hunter, Tom Johnson grew up in a family that celebrated Christmas morning by hunting and then opening presents. It all started for Tom when a friend took him to a DU banquet. "After that, I got curious about why there wasn't a chapter closer to my hometown," Tom said. So he pulled together a committee and founded the Big Thicket Chapter northeast of Houston about 13 years ago. Since then, Tom has been on the national gun committee, the national membership committee and serves now as district chairman.

"I feel like everybody, whether they hunt or not, should support a conservation group," Tom said. "I choose Ducks Unlimited because I feel like I get more bang for my dollar. When I looked at different conservation groups, I found DU's work benefitted the most people."

Banding Together for Waterfowl 2015 Annual Report 12





Goal: \$484 Million

Waterfowl rely on wintering and migration habitats so they return to their breeding grounds in good health to reproduce successfully. These habitats also provide clean, abundant water for drinking and recreation, as well as natural buffers to mitigate the effects of flooding. For these reasons, wintering and migration landscapes are a key priority within the Rescue Our Wetlands campaign.

Waterfowl that migrate to historic wintering grounds are finding the water and food they have relied upon for centuries are disappearing at an alarming rate. Vital marshes along the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast provide wintering and migration habitat for 95 percent of North America's gadwall, 80 percent of green-winged teal and redheads and 60 percent of lesser scaup, as well as many other species of birds.

These wetlands also support sport and commercial fisheries,

and provide important coastal buffers against hurricanes and tropical storms.

Out west, the Pacific coast is a vital link in the Pacific Flyway, providing critical migration and wintering habitat for at least 7 million ducks, geese and other wetland birds. In California alone, more than 95 percent of the Central Valley's seasonal wetlands and 90 percent of its stream corridors have been destroyed or degraded, and urbanization threatens to destroy many of the remaining wetlands crucial to pintails and other migratory birds.

Across the continent along the Atlantic coast, wetlands, floodplain forests, marshes, bays and estuaries serve as the year-round home of wood ducks, American black ducks and other waterfowl, but these habitats are also threatened, primarily due to development and degraded water quality.

Gulf Coast Initiative

Restoring Prairies, Marshes And More



Texas and Louisiana's Gulf Coast prairies and marshes comprise one of the most important waterfowl wintering grounds on the continent. This area may winter more than 15 million waterfowl in a given year, and Louisiana alone hosts nearly half of the Mississippi Flyway population. Sadly, the area also represents one of the greatest waterfowl habitat crises we face.

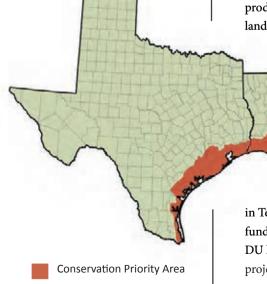
Winter-flooded rice agriculture, critical for waterfowl, continues to decline. Sea level rise, erosion and subsidence are turning more than 10,000 acres of valuable marshes into much less productive open water each year. Historic confinement of the Mississippi River withholds the land-building sediment and nourishing fresh water that could combat these destructive forces.

However, with new funding sources, there is still hope.

Ducks Unlimited is the only conservation organization blending science, advocacy and habitat restoration activities to address habitat loss in the region. In FY15, DU and its partners conserved 23,553 acres of important wetland habitat through the Gulf Coast Initiative.

Recent strides in science include the continual evaluation of foraging resources in rice fields. As this important habitat decreases due to a shifting economy and land use practices, it's critical we quantify the impacts to waterfowl. On the policy front, we continued our engagement

in Texas water discussions, and we are working with partners to appropriately channel oil spill funding into environmental restoration. In the five years since the Deepwater Horizon spill, DU has received \$5.35 million from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for restoration projects in coastal Texas and Louisiana. DU also secured \$17.65 million in NAWCA grants supported by spill funding for restoration on the Gulf Coast and in the Prairie Pothole Region, where most Gulf Coast waterfowl originate. DU has already secured a number of grants for FY16, and will continue its Gulf Coast restoration efforts in the future.



2015 Annual Report Rescue Our Wetlands

St. Louis Canal Restoration Improves 6,000 Acres Of Habitat



Ducks Unlimited and numerous partners replaced the water-control structure in the St. Louis Canal.

Revitalizing freshwater inputs to areas of marsh that have been impacted by saltwater intrusion is a critical restoration tool along the Gulf Coast. Small changes in salinity lead to big changes in plant communities, and returning life-giving fresh water to these marshes will increase production of submerged aquatic vegetation – underwater plants that are important food resources for waterfowl.

In FY15, Ducks Unlimited completed the St. Louis Canal project, a freshwater enhancement project to improve approximately 6,000 acres of marsh along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, including portions of the Pointe-aux-Chenes Wildlife Management Area. Pointe-aux-Chenes is one of the premier public waterfowl hunting areas in Louisiana, and a place where. DU has worked extensively to improve habitat. This project was funded in part by a grant from the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, and other partners include Apache Corporation, ConocoPhillips Company, Richmond Trees and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.



Richard E. Zuschlag, Ambassador to Conservation Lafayette, Louisiana





Richard Zuschlag was recognized as an Ambassador to Conservation by Louisiana Ducks Unlimited. (L-R) DU President Paul Bonderson, Richard Zuschlag, LADU State Chairman Jay Owen and Managing Director of Development Chad Manlaye

Richard Zuschlag understands urgent needs. As co-founder and CEO of Acadian Ambulance Service, Richard found a way to help the people of Louisiana meet their emergency services needs shortly after moving to the state from his Pennsylvania home. Similarly, after learning about the habitat crisis facing waterfowl in coastal Louisiana, Richard took action to stem the flow of wetlands loss by supporting Ducks Unlimited.

"It is an honor for me to work with DU because I am a big believer in conservation," Richard said. "Ducks Unlimited has done a tremendous amount of work to help us restore our wetlands in Louisiana and throughout North America. DU is one of the most respected and admired conservation organizations around because they are able to bring all stakeholders together, from government officials and private donors to scientists and think tanks, all with the single purpose of maximizing our conservation efforts."

A Ducks Unlimited Legacy Sponsor and charter member of the President's Council, Richard repeatedly opens his Grande View Lodge near Creole, Louisiana, to DU for executive volunteer meetings, donor stewardship hunts and staff retreats. Last fall, he hosted a DU fundraiser on the opening weekend of waterfowl season featuring his friend, former Vice President of the United States Dick Cheney. For his multifaceted support, Louisiana Ducks Unlimited recognized Richard with the inaugural state chairman's Ambassador to Conservation award during their 2015 state convention. The award recognizes an individual who has shown dedication to the mission of Ducks Unlimited and championed the organization.

Richard resides in Lafayette with his wife, the former Elaine Dupuis. They have three children, Richard Blair, Erin Elizabeth and Joseph Blaise. Blair and Blaise are also DU Life Sponsors.

Ducks Unlimited de México

Ready For Another 40 Years Of Conservation

Ducks Unlimited de México (DUMAC) celebrated 40 years of conservation last year, and building on that solid foundation, the organization is using the launch of *Rescue Our Wetlands* to embark on another 40 years of actively addressing wetland loss and waterfowl conservation across Mexico. DUMAC's staff is intimately familiar with conservation efforts and attitudes in Mexico, and is well-positioned to achieve DU's wetland and waterfowl conservation goals in a country with a different culture, economic status and hunting tradition than found in the United States or Canada.

Since DU's earliest efforts in 1974, DUMAC's work with national and local governments, farmers and other partners has made significant contributions to Mexico's wetlands and benefited waterfowl such as pintails, blue-winged teal, redheads and black brant that rely on habitats south of the U.S. border.

More than 1.9 million acres of habitat have been conserved to date, and DUMAC staff continues to conduct a satellite-based survey of Mexico that has already inventoried 19.8 million acres of wetlands—more than two times what the government thought existed.

Ambitious in its scale and scope, Rescue Our Wetlands'

goal is healthy and abundant waterfowl populations across the North American continent, and beyond. Through its continuation of the internationally recognized RESERVA program, DUMAC and its partners have trained 485 natural resource managers from 23 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, making its reach unique among the three DU organizations by impacting partner countries beyond the North American continent.

In the coming years, DUMAC will play a vital role in the campaign, specifically through cataloging, protecting and restoring critical wintering and migrating landscapes south of the U.S./Mexico border important to waterfowl.

Although a relatively high percentage of Mexico's mangrove wetlands might remain, these high-value habitats are disappearing rapidly. To combat this global issue, DUMAC has pioneered innovative mangrove restoration techniques and was contracted by CONAFOR, the National Forestry Commission of Mexico, to help train staff in the methods DUMAC has found successful. Mangrove conservation will continue to be a major initiative in DUMAC's contributions to the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign.

Ed And Sally Futch Foundation Helps RESERVA Program And DUMAC



Through the internationally recognized RESERVA program, DUMAC and its partners have trained 485 natural resource managers from 23 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, making it unique among the three DU organizations by impacting the entire western hemisphere. Participants in the program learn about the science and management of wetlands in these regions.

Thanks to the Ed and Sally Futch Foundation's \$40,000 contribution last year, the RESERVA program continued with a second session. Without their eleventh

hour contribution, the session would have been cancelled.

"As a Futch Foundation trustee, I couldn't be happier with the donation to DUMAC and how it's being used," said Anne Brown, Futch Foundation trustee. "My aunt and uncle have always tried to give back as much as they can, and this is one small way we can ensure conservation remains a top priority not only in Mexico, but in all of Latin America."

In addition, the Foundation also donated \$90,000 to DUMAC, and \$40,000 was used to help support the spring session of RESERVA. The remainder of their generous contribution is being used for a wetland restoration project in Tamaulipas just south of Texas. These freshwater wetlands are critical watering sites for birds feeding in the Laguna Madre and the vast majority of the continent's redhead population winters in the region.

Banding Together for Waterfowl 2015 Annual Report 21

Mississippi Alluvial Valley

Conservation Priority Area

From the flooded
bottomlands and rice
fields that winter
greenheads, to the cypress
brakes that provide homes
for wood ducks, the
habitats of the
America's River
Initiative are crucial
to waterfowl.

Science-based Conservation At Work In The Middle Of The Flyway

As the heart of the Mississippi Flyway, the Mississippi Alluvial Valley (MAV) hosts millions of migrating and wintering waterfowl each year. From the flooded bottomlands and rice fields that winter greenheads, to the cypress brakes that provide homes for wood ducks, the habitats of the **America's River Initiative** are crucial to waterfowl, and an important part of the Wintering and Migration Landscapes priority within the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign.

With vast changes to hydrology and more than 80 percent of the historic bottomland forests gone, conserving what remains and restoring what has been lost are top priorities for DU. Helping landowners maximize waterfowl habitat on working lands is also vitally important in the MAV.

Science underpins all of DU's work, and we continue to strengthen that foundation each year. In FY15, DU updated and revised our land protection model, initiated research to assess the contributions of managed private lands toward habitat objectives, and began a research study examining the winter movement patterns and habitat use of white-fronted geese within the MAV.

On the policy front, DU has been actively utilizing 2014 Farm Bill programs to advance on-the-ground habitat delivery. Via the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, DU delivered 1,363 acres of wetland restoration in Mississippi, and 2,284 acres in Louisiana in FY15. DU will also be delivering Farm Bill programs in Arkansas in 2016. With solid science and effective advocacy on our side, DU and its partners conserved 6,207 acres of critical waterfowl habitat through the **America's River Initiative** last year.



Russell Sage Wildlife Management Area's Pump Project

Ducks Unlimited completed installation of the largest pump we've ever installed in FY15 – the massive 48-inch pump can move 46,000 gallons per minute. The project enhanced management capabilities on a 1,900-acre greentree reservoir on Russell Sage WMA near Monroe, Louisiana. Located in the Bayou Lafourche flood plain, this nearly 22,000-acre WMA and its numerous sloughs and shallow bayous are ideal for waterfowl winging their way along the Mississippi Flyway. Additionally, there are two impoundments for waterfowl on Russell Sage totaling 2,400 acres. This project improved habitat for waterfowl and enhanced public hunting opportunities in north-central Louisiana.

In addition to the obvious benefits to waterfowl and waterfowl hunters, wetland enhancement projects like this one have tremendous benefits for all. By slowing down the water draining from the greentree reservoir into Bayou Lafourche, the water-control structures promote nutrient cycling in the forested wetland. Nutrients like nitrogen and

This is part of a DU project most people never see. Pictured here are the inlet pipe (horizontal) and wet well (vertical) for the largest pump installed by DU's Southern Region to date.

phosphorous are absorbed by the forest, improving water quality and preventing nutrient loading downstream. Additionally, sediment has time to settle in the forested wetland, thereby enhancing water clarity and feeding the forest.

This project was made possible by funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and support from partners including Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, DU, Legacy Sponsor Tom Bramble, the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe, the Stuller Family Foundation and Wetlands America Trust.

Earning The Air They Breathe



Jeff and Melissa Morgan, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Jeff Morgan has been a philanthropic and volunteer leader for Ducks Unlimited for 40 years. "Somebody told me early on I needed to do something on this earth to earn the air I breathe besides just paying my taxes," he said. "That's a simple philosophy but it makes a lot of sense. So it doesn't matter if it's DU, your school, your church or something else you be-

lieve in, you'll get out of it what you put in. If you want it to be there for future generations, you better lend a hand."

Like many DU supporters, Jeff's connection to DU began with hunting. "Duck hunting is something I have done since I was a teenager and duck season is my favorite part of the year," he said.

His wife, Melissa, started hunting with Jeff before they were married and she got hooked too. The couple's kids grew up enjoying the sport and their daughter took a photo of ducks on the rise that was published in an annual DU calendar.

As Jeff was nearing 30 years old, the late Ward Reilly, one of the founders of the Chattanooga DU chapter, came to see him about becoming a Ducks Unlimited Life

Sponsor. "I was pretty young for a commitment like that, but Ward explained a concept to me that I think is very true," Jeff said. "If you believe in a charitable organization and its cause, you get behind it in whatever way you can financially."

Jeff and Melissa's reasons for supporting DU are very clear. "We support lots of charities, but DU is near the top of our list because of the work the organization does to not only preserve and protect waterfowl and critical wetlands for future generations of wide-eyed kids, but DU's work on Capitol Hill is critical to maintaining some sense of balance with issues like the Clean Water Act and the Farm Bill," Jeff said. "There are some extreme views vying for traction and without science-based research, there's no telling where things would go."

The California Wetlands Initiative





Still suffering from a devastating drought, California remains a critically important habitat for a diverse selection of waterfowl, including northern pintail and white-fronted geese. However, only a little more than five percent of the state's historic marshes and 10 percent of its riparian corridors remain. To combat these historic and ongoing losses as part of the Wintering and Migration Landscapes priority of *Rescue Our Wetlands*, Ducks Unlimited is spearheading conservation efforts via the **California Wetlands Initiative** on three regions of particular concern: the Central Valley, San Francisco Bay and Lower Klamath Basin, focusing on conserving the remaining wetlands that sustain waterfowl through important science, public policy, restoration and outreach efforts.

DU's western region staff works with federal, state and private landowners to deliver projects that restore habitat, maximize water-use efficiency and optimize available wetlands to provide as much food resources as possible.

DU also works with the rice industry in the state to ensure rice farming practices, primarily winter flooding of harvested fields, remain a large, and critically important, part of the landscape. Waste grain left in harvested fields accounts for 60 percent of the food resources ducks and geese use in parts of

the Central Valley during the winter.

The California Wetlands Initiative accounted for nearly 13,000 conserved acres in FY15, with numerous conservation projects taking place throughout the state, including at Sears Point, Grey Lodge Wildlife Area, Sherman Island and the Grasslands Ecological Area. Generous donations on behalf of the initiative have allowed

Ducks Unlimited to restore and enhance quality waterfowl habitat that provides opportunities for public hunting and other waterfowl-related recreation for future generations.

Only a little more than five percent of the state's historic marshes and 10 percent of its riparian corridors remain.

Still Dealing With Drought

California is now experiencing its fifth year of extreme drought with the effects quickly spreading to neighboring western states. The federal government declared a drought emergency in California due to a record-low snowpack in the Sierra Nevada and the warmest June on record in 120 years. Governor Jerry Brown additionally ordered mandatory water conservation programs requiring major cuts around the state, depending on annual water use and location.

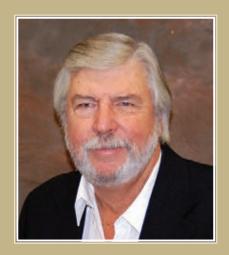
These water restrictions put an extraordinary amount of strain on the wetlands and rice fields that provide food, shelter and a place to rest for the millions of waterfowl that utilize the region. The Sacramento Valley, which normally sees an average of 300,000 acres of flooded rice each winter, is estimated to likely have only 50,000 acres in 2015, coinciding with a banner year for numbers of migrating waterfowl.

Despite many challenges, DU continues to the lead the way in habitat conservation, both by advocating policy issues at the state and federal level and through its on-the-ground work. As a part of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to the California Water Commission, DU is providing a conservation voice



in decisions related to water storage investments approved by voters in the \$7.5 billion 2014 Water Bond. By actively engaging in these ongoing water issues, DU is ensuring that the needs of waterfowl and waterfowlers are taken into consideration when state and national leaders are forced to make tough decisions.

Pepper Snyder Supporting The Pacific Flyway



Pepper Snyder

The name of Pepper Snyder's Silicon Valley-based electrical company says everything you need to know about the man: Sprig Electric.

Named after the northern pintail, Snyder's business ranks among the largest electrical contracting companies in California. It is among the largest privately held companies in Silicon Valley.

Snyder's experience with duck hunting began around the age of 10, thanks to his father's relationship with rice farmers in the Northern California town of Willows. Snyder has been a landowner in the Grassland Water District since 1980 when he and his business partner purchased the Clear Lake Land and Cattle Duck Club. In addition to his role as the CEO of Sprig Electric, Snyder is the president of the Grassland's Board of Directors, as well as a Ducks Unlimited Gold Sponsor.

"I've always been somewhat involved with DU since my 20s and became more heavily involved with the organization as time went on through my work as president of the Grasslands, because we work so closely together on water issues in California," Snyder said. "DU's role in

the state is absolutely huge, especially on the political front."

Snyder and his wife, Sherri, reside in Los Banos, California, and have four grown children. He is the co-chair of DU's extremely popular Blackhawk Gala and a President's Council member, but still finds the work of Ducks Unlimited's volunteers to be one of his inspirations.

"The integrity of all the DU volunteers in their commitment is amazing to me. The quality of people involved is incredible, as is their vision of the great resource we are trying to maintain," Snyder said. "The quickest way to eliminate any species is to take away its home. Ducks Unlimited puts so much effort into maintaining the habitat and connecting all the conservation dots from California to Alaska, Canada and back to Mexico in the best interests of the Pacific Flyway."

Banding Jogether for Waterfowl

Southeast Wetlands Initiative

Some of the United States' most famous vet threatened wetland systems can be found in the area classified as DU's Southeast Wetlands Initiative (SWI), a regional initiative supporting the Wintering and Migration Landscapes priority within Rescue Our Wetlands. From the Chesapeake Bay and coastal Carolinas to the St. Johns River, Mobile Bay, Tennessee River and the Everglades, waterfowl find incredible habitat throughout the southeastern United States. Aside from the habitat diversity, perhaps the most impressive aspects of this area are the strength of the people's conservation ethic and a passion for their hunting heritage.

The greatest threats to waterfowl habitat in this region come from land conversion. As a result, DU focuses on permanent protection of remaining habitats on private lands through donated conservation easements. We also work with state and federal partners on public lands already protected from development to maximize those habitats for waterfowl and to increase public hunting opportunities.

In FY15, Ducks Unlimited conserved 32,573 acres of prime waterfowl habitat through the Southeast Wetlands Initiative. Work on Mattamuskeet and Pea Island national wildlife refuges (NWR) in North Carolina; the Santee, ACE Basin and Savannah NWRs in South Carolina; Princess Anne and Hog Island wildlife management areas and the Great Dismal Swamp NWR in Virginia are just a few of our projects this year. On the science front, DU supported recently completed studies looking at the ecology and management of mottled ducks in South Carolina. DU is busy developing conservation projects in every state within the SWI to deliver in FY16 and beyond.

Wells Fargo Boosts Ducks Unlimited's Reach



A Wells Fargo grant will help Ducks Unlimited restore 1,300 acres at Hog Island Wildlife Management Area in Virginia.

DU's conservation success isn't possible without support from private organizations like Gold Benefactor Wells Fargo.

The financial leader has given \$181,000 to DU in several states, mainly through its Environmental Solutions for Communities partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

"Ducks Unlimited is building great momentum by developing relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders, and we are proud to be associated with such an important organization," said Scott Salisbury, senior vice president - wealth advisor, with Wells Fargo.

The most recent grant is for DU's work on 1,300 acres at Hog Island Wildlife Management Area in Virginia. The work will restore water management by replacing water-control structures, removing debris from existing canals and enhancing embankments.

"Supporting conservation partnerships such as our multiyear relationship with Ducks Unlimited is important because the projects we help fund protect the environment and land that are important to our wildlife, and also have a vital impact on water quality in their respective regions," Salisbury said.

Virginia has lost more than 42 percent of its historical wetland acreage. This project will improve wildlife habitat and restore wetland functions. Located in the James River Basin, the area is high-priority habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and migrating raptors.

"Our support of the Montezuma Wetlands in New York, the Prairie Pothole Region in North Dakota, and most recently the Coastal Wetlands project in Hog Island, Virginia, helps wetlands that are critical to numerous migratory bird species along with hundreds of other fish and wildlife species," Salisbury added.

Conservation

Priority Area

Big Rivers Initiative

The **Big Rivers Initiative**, which focuses on the central United States, conserved nearly 5,200 acres of habitat in FY15. Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri and Wisconsin all saw migrating and breeding waterfowl landscape improvements.

An Illinois DU wetland restoration in fall 2014 is another reminder that investments in wetland conservation benefit both ducks and people. The 83-acre project in Woodford County redirects a portion of the water flowing through Richland Creek to a DU-restored wetland. The work provides habitat for migrating ducks and improves water quality in the Illinois River by trapping excess nutrients and sediment eroded from nearby croplands.

Another effort on a larger scale continues to progress thanks to donor support. At the confluence of the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri rivers is North America's greatest floodplain that carries water from over half of the continental United States.

Conservation Priority Area

Within Missouri alone, DU holds 26 conservation easements

totaling 8,154 acres. These easements have generated nearly \$38 million in conservation easement value.

Completing the Cycle Initiative

In FY15, Ducks Unlimited and its partners restored and protected more than 2,900 new acres in the Atlantic Flyway, which supports millions of waterfowl and thousands of dedicated waterfowl hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts. DU designed the

Completing the Cycle Initiative to support waterfowl from Chesapeake Bay to the islands off Canada's Atlantic coast.

Choptank Watershed Wetland Restoration Program in Maryland aims to restore privately owned, marginally productive farmlands back to wetlands. The first project under

this program was completed in April. Four more projects are slated for completion and DU has already begun efforts on five additional projects with planned completion dates in summer 2016. These projects will represent nearly 75 acres of restored wetlands for waterfowl and wildlife while also acting as natural buffers to remove excess sediment and nutrients from source waterways.

DU and partners were awarded a \$67,000 North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant in New Jersey thanks to \$160,000 in matching funds provided by Ducks Unlimited's **Completing the Cycle Initiative** and project partners. The project will enhance 76 acres of wetland habitat at Paulinskill River Wildlife Management Area.

Larry Davis' Love For The Ducks Runs Deep

Larry Davis' support of Ducks Unlimited runs as deep as the roots of his nearly 400-year-old family farm.

Davis is DU's Connecticut state chairman, a Diamond Life sponsor and the 12th generation to harvest crops on the farm, which was established in 1654. The family farm lies within DU's Completing the Cycle Initiative region.

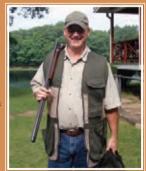
"My grandfather told us, keep the land and the land will keep you," Davis said.

A longtime hunter, Davis is passionate about DU's mission because it parallels what he lives every day. His entire farm is covered by conservation easements, protecting it for generations beyond his own.

"It's a very short leap from family farming over to the

philanthropic side of trying to save other land and continue my passion for waterfowl. It was very seamless," he said.

Davis joined DU in 1986 and has held nearly every DU position in Connecticut. He's been state chairman for three years. He's a member of DU's national Conservation Programs Committee, a responsibility he considers to be



Larry Davis

the apex of his DU career. He was named the 2009 Conversationist of the Year for DU's Great Lakes/Atlantic Region.

Conservation

Priority Area

Heartland Heritage and Habitat Initiative

Ducks Unlimited works through the **Heartland Heritage and Habitat Initiative** to protect and restore wetland habitat in the face of a growing population relying on an already thirsty and burdened landscape.

In Nebraska and Kansas, Ducks Unlimited will complete 44 habitat protection and restoration projects, thanks to three North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants. DU is combining more than \$2.9 million in NAWCA funding with nearly \$6 million in funding from 25 partners to protect more than 7,000

acres and restore or enhance almost 11,000 acres in the Rainwater Basin and central Platte River of Nebraska and central Kansas marshes



Conservation
Priority Area

In Colorado, Ducks Unlimited is helping farmers, municipalities and industry address water needs by building or restoring wetlands near the Platte River . . .

In Colorado, Ducks Unlimited is helping farmers, municipalities and industry address water needs by building or restoring wetlands near the Platte River that help recharge the river, while enhancing waterfowl habitat. The projects allow users to withdraw the water they need during peak water flow periods.

Protecting Colorado Wetlands

When Jack Ferguson was in his 20s, one of his good friends asked him to help get Ducks Unlimited a much-needed boost in Colorado. That was about 60 years ago.

As sponsor chairman, Jack signed on his dad as one of the first sponsors in the state. Jack also became a Bronze Sponsor. Back then, there were only three in Colorado.

Thanks to supporters like Jack, DU has grown to around 10,000 members in Colorado. Jack is now a Life Sponsor and has helped organize major sponsor events.

"DU has been a great help to me, and I am happy to support them, which I have done through most of my life," he said.

Lately, Ducks Unlimited has been helping the Fergusons recover

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habitat on their land. Like other land along the Platte River, recent flooding took out fences, culverts, levees and did other damage, leaving floodwater on the ground for 14 weeks. Jack says DU staff helped restore the marsh and answer his questions about waterfowl and wetlands.

"They've provided good counsel, and I've done my best to follow their lead. The land has been a great waterfowl resting area," Jack added. "Now that water has become so dear in Colorado, my main intent is to restore and maintain its wetland habitat."



Jack Ferguson (left) talks habitat with DU Regional Biologist Matt Reddy.

Wings and Wetlands Initiative

million within

Conservation Priority Area

The Pacific Northwest is filled with some of America's most stunning natural treasures, as well as millions of waterfowl that utilize the estuaries, seasonal wetlands and floodplain marshes that exist within the boundaries of DU's **Wings and Wetlands Initiative**.

Significant wetland habitat in this region has been lost over time and, as human populations soar and a devastating drought spreads, the demand for water is increasing daily.

The waterfowl that depend on the Pacific Northwest are under constant pressure, from the Puget Sound, where more than 80 percent of wetlands have already been lost, to the Southern Oregon and Northeastern California (SONEC) area, which serves as an important gathering place for migrating waterfowl. Also important to waterfowl, the extensive floodplains and marshes of the upper Snake River basin of Eastern Idaho, including the renowned Henry's Fork Watershed, are at risk.

Through the **Wings and Wetlands Initiative**, DU is building conservation efforts in this critical portion of the Pacific Flyway by collaborating with private landowners, Native American tribes and government agencies to deliver habitat restoration, enhancement and protection throughout Washington, Oregon and Idaho. In FY15, DU conserved more than 5,500 acres through the initiative, thanks to projects such as the Clark Fork River Delta Restoration in Idaho and the restoration of the Samish Unit in Washington's Skagit Wildlife Area.

Ducks in the Desert Initiative

The arid climates of Utah, Nevada and Arizona wouldn't seem to be naturally appealing to waterfowl at first glance. However, the waterfowl of the Pacific Flyway take advantage of the existing wetlands that dot this region, providing scarce but important food and water to sustain them while in route from their northern breeding grounds to their wintering grounds. DU's **Ducks in the Desert Initiative** works to protect these precious wetlands for both waterfowl and waterfowl enthusiasts whose water supply is threatened by a number of factors, including drought and development.

Supplying wetlands with water high in quantity and quality is

DU's foremost consideration for the more than 2 million waterfowl that migrate south to the Great Salt Lake, through western Nevada and on to Arizona and California.

During FY15, Ducks Unlimited conserved 2,724 acres through the **Ducks in the Desert Initiative** thanks to projects that restore wetlands and improve water deliveries, with more in the works over the next several years. Recent and ongoing Ducks Unlimited projects in Nevada include work with the Overton Wildlife Management Area, at Carson Lake and Pasture, and with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at Stillwater National Wildlife Reserve.

Nevada's Tom Enos Is Making A Difference In The Very Dry West



Many hunters wait nervously to hear duck bag limits each year, but Tom Enos says hunters in his state may have a tough time just finding waterfowl. Nevada, like much of the West, is struggling with four years of drought.

"It's a serious drought. I belong to the Canvasback Club, next to the Stillwater Wildlife Refuge. The club has been in existence since 1922 and the club and the refuge are virtually dry this year," Tom said. "No one recalls it ever being this dry."

Tom is a member of the Ducks Unlimited board of directors and serves on the finance committee. Raised on DU in Nevada, he is a long-time volunteer. After 12 years in Colorado, Tom and his wife, Ora, moved to the foothills of the Sierras, south of Reno.

"We are undertaking a long-overdue upgrade of our IT system. We are growing our public policy capacity so we can maintain critical funding from public agencies. All of these things need to happen so we can continue with all of our current and future initiatives, no matter what the hunting season is like," he said.

Tom and Ora are Legacy Sponsors, members of the President's Council and Grand Slam Life Sponsors.



Waterfowl Forever

Goal: \$500 Million

Waterfowl Forever, the campaign priority at the heart of *Rescue Our Wetlands*, recognizes that all DU members and supporters contribute directly to the success of the campaign and play a vital role in wetlands and waterfowl conservation. Through Waterfowl Forever, every Ducks Unlimited supporter can make a difference.

People – volunteers, members, supporters and partners – are the primary reason for Ducks Unlimited's success

in achieving its conservation mission. Unrestricted funds raised through this priority provide programmatic and operational support where the need is greatest.

This broad support provides the power needed to drive the DU engine, conserve, restore and enhance wetlands habitat, influence conservation policy, conduct research, forge lasting partnerships and provide the leverage needed for conservation success long into the future.



photo credit: Gary Kramer

Fundraising



Fundraising teams of volunteers and staff
banded together to launch Ducks Unlimited's
new Rescue Our Wetlands campaign...
considered the most ambitious of its kind in history

Ducks Unlimited's mission to conserve, restore and manage wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl is continental in scale and timeless in scope. To ensure our vision of habitat sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever, DU volunteers and other members have always generously given their time, energy and money. DU invests these resources carefully to achieve the greatest benefit for this continent's waterfowl, other wildlife and people.

FY15 was another incredibly successful year for Ducks Unlimited. Fundraising teams of volunteers and staff banded together for waterfowl and generated astounding growth in the event system, and generous major sponsors stepped up to produce important funds for conservation programs across the continent. They also banded together to launch DU's ambitious new *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign at the DU National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where DU staff, volunteers, donors and supporters gathered together to celebrate the launch of the \$2 billion campaign, considered the most ambitious of its kind in history.

This year's annual report again features impressive stories about DU's fundraising events, membership activities and our important partners, and tells the personal stories of some of the donors who have already joined together to support *Rescue Our Wetlands*. These stories illustrate the commitment of our volunteers and donors to do what needs to be done to conserve habitats important to the birds we love.

Thank you for what you do for Ducks Unlimited every day, and in every way. You are what drives this organization and you, Team DU, will ensure our continued success in FY16 and beyond as we strive to *Rescue Our Wetlands*.



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Historic Growth Continues For Fifth Straight Year

Ducks Unlimited's event fundraising system eclipsed budgeted goals for the fifth straight year in FY15 through a combination of time-honored gatherings and a promising surge of non-traditional revenue growth.

More than 55,000 volunteers gave their time and talents to the organization in FY15 and the result was staggering. More than \$56 million in net proceeds were raised through events with a total attendance of more than a half million supporters. This constituted a 4 percent growth in revenue and 8 percent growth in event attendance.

While the local Ducks Unlimited banquet remained the most popular method for chapters to engage members in their community, FY15 saw the emergence of several events marketed for the DU "lifestyle" supporter.

State calendar drawings, gun bashes and regional raffle parties drove non-traditional income totals to greater than 10 percent of all revenues raised. Diversification of revenue also resulted in a broadened member base and an expanded reach towards outdoors-minded supporters who believe in DU's conservation mission.



DU Volunteers Keep Doing It For The Ducks

Since Ducks Unlimited was founded in 1937, volunteers have always been critical to Ducks Unlimited's success. As the heart and soul of Ducks Unlimited, dedicated volunteers across our country manage and coordinate local fundraising events, energize college campuses, raise political awareness, and showcase wildlife art.

Whether it's selling tickets, gathering donations, securing sponsorships, contacting government officials or putting together one heck of a college party, DU volunteers generate millions of dollars and thousands of memberships annually.

DU Events Grow, Despite Challenges

While FY15 will be remembered as a year of successful event fundraising growth, it certainly was not without administrative challenges.

An array of amendments prohibiting longstanding fundraising methods for non-profit organizations became law in numerous states, resulting in the need to alter operational protocols in many states.

Always ready to meet a challenge, DU volunteers and staff worked tirelessly to ensure new regulations were followed and organizational fundraising efforts were in compliance with new legislation.

The adaptive nature of DU's event system operations again proved why Ducks Unlimited is not only the leader in wetlands conservation, but an industry leader in fundraising events.





photo credit: Gary Kramer

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Growing the Flock

Ducks Unlimited members are the cornerstones of wetlands and waterfowl conservation. A strong membership base promotes Ducks Unlimited's conservation efforts and protects the future of waterfowl hunting. Our members provide more than \$80 million a year in philanthropic support, are Ducks Unlimited's primary source of unrestricted revenue and are the source of strength for Ducks Unlimited's public policy efforts. From major gifts and planned giving to corporate partners and advertising revenue, Ducks Unlimited members make all other sources of revenue possible and are the foundation upon which *Rescue Our Wetlands* will find success.

Ducks Unlimited's total membership increased to 722,000 members in FY15, an increase of 4.7 percent, which exceeded the FY15 goal by 13,000 members. This increase, the fourth consecutive year in which the membership goal has been achieved, included 673,000 adult members and 49,000 youth members. Ducks Unlimited supporters who have donated within the past three years continue to number in excess of 1 million people.

Ducks Unlimited event volunteers played a vital role by hosting more than 4,500 grassroots fundraising events and inviting other waterfowl hunters, conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts to join them in support of Ducks Unlimited's mission. The event fundraising program produces the majority

of DU's members and event membership increased 6.1 percent from FY14 to FY15.

In addition to a vibrant event network, Ducks Unlimited operates a successful direct response program which generated \$12.2 million in revenue for the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign in FY15. Through member acquisition, renewal offerings and fundraising campaigns, members and supporters interact with and donate directly to Ducks Unlimited. Not only has Ducks Unlimited had success reaching its supporters through direct mail, but we continue to find success reaching new and current supporters through digital sources including online marketing, Facebook, email and the Ducks Unlimited website with a coordinated effort between DU's Digital Media and Marketing and Direct Response teams.

Website traffic achieved record heights last year, with 5.4 million site visitors accounting for 66 million page views. In FY15, nearly \$4 million was generated through the DU website as a result of online giving, membership and advertising. Non-event membership increased 4 percent in FY15.

Through the hard work of passionate volunteers and the generous support of its members and supporters, Ducks Unlimited is well positioned to achieve the FY16 membership goal of 740,000 adult and youth members, and continue its conservation success for generations to come.

Major Sponsors



President's Council Makes a Big Impact

President's Council members are some of Ducks Unlimited's most distinguished and influential supporters. There are 300 council members across the United States, Canada and Mexico and they make Ducks Unlimited's mission one of their top philanthropic goals by contributing a least \$10,000 each year.

As we meet with members across the country we are very thankful for their considered advice and amazing dedication. The experience and authority they share from years in business, finance, industry, government and philanthropy make DU more

successful and our conservation programs more effective.

We recognize council members for having a significant impact on waterfowl resources and policy and we are grateful that you do this through Ducks Unlimited. The President's Council was created to provide an opportunity for conservationists to participate in some of the most important initiatives, policies and projects that DU undertakes. We are very appreciative for the leadership that guides and grows the organization.



Paul R. Bonderson Jr.
President, Ducks Unlimited Inc.



The Mark

Steve Maritz President, Wetlands America Trust

Field Experiences

Ducks Unlimited Experiences are two-day, hands-on field and classroom encounters that bring DU donors, staff and partners in touch with the projects and programs they help Ducks Unlimited deliver across the continent.

From Canada to Mexico and all points in between, Ducks Unlimited Experiences showcase the importance of wetlands for waterfowl and people.

DU's science and biological staff guide participants through the science behind our conservation mission and then take them to the field to see it all in action. By learning how DU funds conservation programs and determines the most important landscapes to conserve, guests come away with an in-depth understanding of the importance of wetlands and the waterfowl they support.

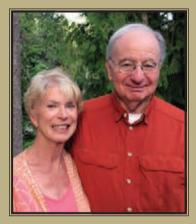


Releasing banded birds serves educational and scientific purposes.



President's Council member Justin Scheuduring a banding session in Louisiana.

Committed To The Cause



Doug and Carol Federighi

A California native, Doug Federighi started waterfowling as a young man in the 1960s in the northern part of the state and was immediately hooked, eventually becoming a highly valued philanthropist for waterfowl conservation.

After many years of dedicating

himself to issues in the grasslands and seasonal marshes of California's Merced County, where he still serves as vice president of the Grasslands Water District, Doug became involved in Ducks Unlimited in the early 1990s as a major donor and volunteer by joining DU's Conservation Programs Committee (CPC).

"I got serious with Ducks Unlimited when a former Western Region Director of Operations took me to Canada and introduced me to Gary Stewart, who was DU's regional biologist for Alberta at the time. They showed me around the prairie potholes and introduced me to work they were doing, which convinced me that DU was the place for me to direct my conservation efforts."

A DU Gold Benefactor and Grand Slam Diamond Life Sponsor, Senior

Advisory Vice President for Conservation Federighi is also a member of Ducks Unlimited's President's Council, an honor he holds in high regard.

But it isn't just success on the ground that keeps Doug attracted to DU's conservation mission—it's the people he has met and the relationships he's forged.

"We're all drawn to being with an organization that is so effective at meeting our conservation needs, which is what I appreciate about Ducks Unlimited. DU does such a fantastic job of meeting my goals. But there is a saying going around that you come to DU for the conservation and you stay because of the people, and it's so true. The people you meet are so committed to the cause, which is what I believe separates DU from other conservation organizations."

Wetlands America Trust



Since its beginning as the Ducks Unlimited Foundation in 1955 – and its name change in 1994 – Wetlands America Trust has provided specialized financial leadership and philanthropic support to Ducks Unlimited. The primary responsibility of this board is to help ensure the organization achieves its philanthropic potential, including during the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign, as well as serve as DU's land trust. WAT also has become increasingly involved in critical public policy issues impacting wetlands conservation.

As one of the largest land trusts accredited by the Land Trust Alliance, WAT trustees oversee the permanent protection of more than 440,000 acres of priority habitat in North and have the ability to engage other corporate and industry leaders throughout the United States. This provides an opportunity to put our mission front and center with the decision-makers of the business world. Trustees also use their relationships to reach out to lawmakers in Washington to help further DU's conservation mission. Because of their status as industry leaders, trustees also have the ability to reach lawmakers from their home states to promote support for conservation efforts that effectively shape policy beneficial to DU's mission of waterfowl, wetlands and grasslands conservation.

WAT President Steve Maritz, Vice President Doug Oberhelman and Trustee John Thompson all played major roles in the



Wetlands America Trust

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The WAT board and the DU Board of Directors work in close partnership to ensure DU's mission is at the forefront of all decisions made regarding support for the organization and conservation as a whole.

America. In addition, trustees work closely with DU staff and volunteers in pursuit of significant philanthropic support. The WAT board and the DU Board of Directors work in close partnership to ensure DU's mission is at the forefront of all decisions made regarding support for the organization and conservation as a whole.

WAT trustees are among the leaders of American business

launch of DU's comprehensive campaign in 2015. This effort, continental in scope, has a goal of raising \$2 billion for wetlands and waterfowl conservation, and is one of the largest campaigns in the history of conservation. WAT trustees have played a crucial role in every campaign undertaken by the organization and have again taken a lead role in *Rescue Our Wetlands*.

Seeing The Big Picture

People give to people. Diamond Legacy Sponsor and Wetlands America Trust board member Gary Butler will tell you that first thing. Gary became involved when he joined the Suburban DU chapter in New Jersery in the early 1980s. He later moved to Illinois, near DU's previous Chicago headquarters. There he met DU head of Human Resources Dave Riley. "Dave and my good friend Bill Allen convinced me to join, and eventually co-chair, the Barrington DU Chapter," Butler said. "Dave became a great friend and hunting partner and was a significant influence on my conservation philanthropy whether it be volunteering, seeking corporate support or giving money."

After several years in Chicago, Gary migrated back to New Jersey and became the CEO of ADP Corporation and carried his commitment to conservation with him. "Dave asked me to secure funding to kick off the important work needed in the Meadowlands Wetlands Complex," Butler said.

The Meadowlands is an expansive marsh and the last tidal wetland in northern New Jersey. It is directly across the Hudson River from Manhattan and adjacent to the MetLife sports complex, home to the National Football League's New York Giants and New York Jets.

"I convinced the ADP Foundation to step in to get things going in the right direction," Butler said. "Thousands of people

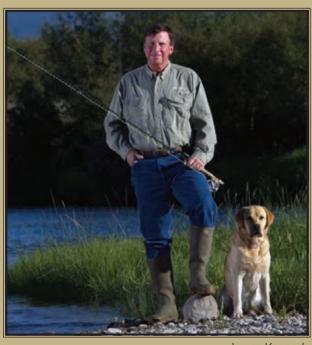


Garv Butler

visit, teach and study in the complex each year. Everybody benefits from what Ducks Unlimited has done there."

Butler didn't come from a hunting family. He came to it in his 20s through his in-laws. "My father-in-law was a multi-generational South Carolina quail hunter," said Butler. "He took me out for my first hunt, and after that initial covey rise over a pair of English pointers, I was hooked for life. I have loved pursuing all kinds of winged game ever since."

James C. Kennedy's Support of Ducks Unlimited is Unwavering



James Kennedy

Starting as a volunteer at a local chapter in the Atlanta area in the mid-70s, James C. Kennedy has since become one of DU's most prolific and ardent supporters. He has been a member of the Wetlands America Trust (WAT) board for more than two decades and served as WAT president for 15 years, starting in 1993. Kennedy's philanthropic gifts place him among DU's most generous supporters. Along with his staunch support of DU, he also funds waterfowl teaching and research at four major universities: Mississippi State, University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, Clemson University and Colorado State University. Through his donations to each of these schools, Kennedy is working to ensure that academic programs focusing on waterfowl and wetlands conservation remain viable. Kennedy has a unique perspective having started his DU career in the local event system, serving as area chairman, district chairman and Georgia state chairman. As his knowledge of DU's conservation work grew, so did his desire to support the organization's mission.

Corporate Partners Impact **Ducks Unlimited's Mission**

Banding together with partners in industry is a big part of the historic success of Ducks Unlimited, and that continued corporate support will play a critical role in meeting the goals of Rescue Our Wetlands. Successful and respected organizations, corporations and brands recognize Ducks Unlimited as one of the most successful membership-based conservation organizations in the world and as the leader in wetlands conservation. They understand the importance of our mission and the critical need to support DU with commitments, resources and quality products.

Through DU's Corporate Partner Program, corporate sponsors, product licensees and promotional partners make an impact on wetlands and waterfowl conservation and share DU's conservation message with millions of people through their marketing efforts.

Since its launch in 1985, DU's Corporate Partner Program has generated more than \$100 million in unrestricted funds for conservation. Our generous corporate partners also play a major role in DU's success by underwriting and donating products to fundraising events across the country.

DU's New Partners For FY15:

Nestle Purina **Axalta Coatings Systems** Higdon Decoys **Drake Waterfowl Systems** Mossy Oak Brand Camo **RAM Trucks**

First National Bank of Omaha Mud River

Ducks Unlimited Is Also Proud To Recognize Some Of Our Long-time Partners In Conservation.

Artisans Apparel (23 years) Outdoor Cap (19 years) Winchester Ammunition

(20 years) War Eagle Boats (19 years) Barton Cotton (24 years)

Our Proud Partners

Drake Waterfowl Systems

DU Store Nestle Purina Academy

AES Outdoors First National Bank of Omaha Orvis

Gander Mountain Outdoor Cap **Axalta Coating Systems** American Luxury Coach Gator-Tail Outboards Pyramex America Remembers Heininger Automotive RAM Trucks Higdon Decoys Artisans Apparel Remington

Ball Watch USA **Identity Check Printers** Signature Products Group

Barton Cotton Itasca Footwear SportDOG Brand Bass Pro Shops Jack Daniel's Star Fish Vision **K2** Coolers **United Country** Browning Calendar Specialists Kimlor Mills **VPI** Pet Insurance

Carolina Hosiery Mills **Lockton Affinity** W.R. Case and Sons Cutlery

The Check Gallery Mack's Prairie Wings War Eagle Boats

CK Power The McGee Group Western Spirits Beverage Co.

Constellation Brands MetLife Winchester Ammunition

Mossy Oak Brand Camo Yamaha Desperate Enterprises Mud River

First National Bank of Omaha

Ducks Unlimited is proud to welcome First Bankcard as one of its newest corporate partners, offering the new Ducks Unlimited Visa card. The new card is issued by the nation's largest privately held financial institution, First National Bank of Omaha.

First National Bank manages more than 350 strategic partnerships with major brands such as Orvis, National Rifle Association, The Chrysler Group, National Geographic and Scheel's Sporting Goods, just to name a few. With several designs to choose from, DU members and supporters will be happy to know with every purchase made with their DU Visa card, they are making a difference for waterfowl and wetlands habitat for future generations.

"Ducks Unlimited is extremely grateful to have corporate partners like First Bankcard who recognize the importance of our mission and respect our natural resources," said DU CEO Dale Hall. "It's critical to have company-wide support from the staff within

each of our corporate partners for our programs to be success-

ful. From the top down,
First National Bank's
team truly understands
the importance of our
hunting heritage and it's
clear to see the passion

they have, as a company, to help *Rescue Our Wetlands*."

First National Bank of Omaha Chairman of the Board Bruce Lauritzen is an avid outdoorsman and conservationist. He is an active DU member and has been a Major Donor for more than 28 years. Bruce and his wife, Gerry, are Diamond Legacy Sponsors and President's Council Members and he also currently serves as a Trustee for Wetlands America Trust.

"First National Bank of Omaha is pleased to support Ducks Unlimited with its conservation projects which have created the finest habitat restoration program in North America," Lauritzen said.



Axalta and Ducks Unlimited painting a bright future for wetlands



As a major developer, manufacturer, and seller of industrial coatings in the United States and some 130 countries around the world, DU partner Axalta is also in the business of protecting and conserving natural resources. Therefore, it is only fitting that Axalta focuses its corporate giving on water conservation and sustainability projects. In 2015, Axalta committed to working with DU through 2020 as part of a \$10 million wetlands conservation program benefitting people and wildlife in the communities we touch.

Bass Pro Shops showcases Ducks Unlimited at the Memphis Pyramid

Since opening on April 29, 2015, the Ducks Unlimited Waterfowling Heritage Center, inside Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid in Memphis, allows visitors to learn about Ducks Unlimited, wetlands conservation, waterfowl, the history of waterfowl hunting in North America, and the important role that sportsmen and women have played in conserving our continent's wildlife and habitat.

CARDHOLDER NAME

"Ducks Unlimited has been a proud conservation partner with Bass Pro Shops for many years," said Ducks Unlimited

CEO Dale Hall. "Through their continued generosity, the Ducks Unlimited Waterfowling Heritage Center is a spectacular way to cement that important partnership. And with

both the Bass Pro Shops and DU Waterfowling Heritage Center logos gracing the south side of the Pyramid, this partnership is a tremendous boost to public awareness of our brand and mission."



State and Federal Agency Partners

State Contributions Program Continues To Put Dollars On The Ground In Canada

DU leverages the dollars it raises to attract state, federal and other funding sources, resulting in a much greater impact on the ground. In FY15, DU raised \$102 million from government and non-governmental partnerships, including \$73 million from our state and federal partners. A prime example of an effective partnership is the State Contributions Program to conserve habitat on the Canadian breeding grounds.

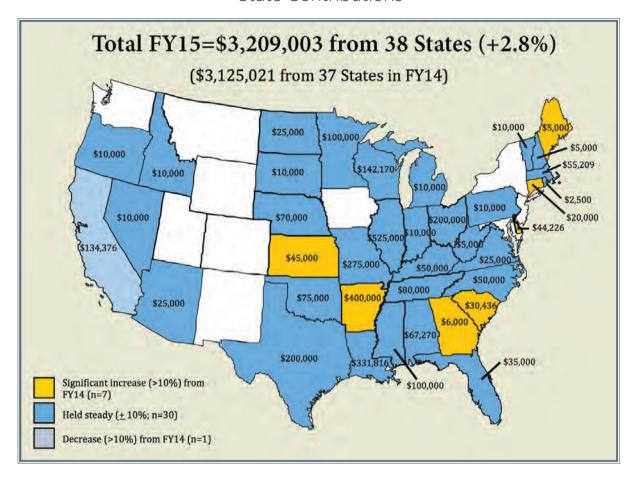
Although a few states recognized the importance of the breeding grounds and funded work in Canada as early as 1965, the impetus to broaden that support came with the signing of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) in 1986 by the United States

and Canada. Mexico signed on in 1994. Although representing the most ambitious continental wildlife conservation initiative ever, the NAWMP did not provide any funding to achieve its purpose. Fortunately, Congress passed the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) in 1989, providing the critical funding mechanism for the NAWMP. However, the NAWCA requires non-federal funds to match federal dollars at least 1:1.

In support of the NAWMP and in recognition of the need for non-federal match funding, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies established the State Contributions Program with an annual \$10 million goal for state agencies to support NAWMP/NAWCA projects in Canada. To increase the conservation impact, DU matches every dollar contributed by states, and works with DU Canada to match those dollars with NAWCA and Canadian partner funds to deliver waterfowl habitat conservation projects on the breeding grounds.

State agencies have contributed more than \$85 million to help conserve 6.5 million acres of habitat across Canada. These dollars are then leveraged with DU funds and NAWCA grant dollars making the total investment in Canadian habitat conservation more than \$340 million. FY15 saw a record number of states and contributions – 38 states gave more than \$3.2 million to Canadian projects.





DU Recognizes Three States For 50 Years Of Canadian Habitat Conservation

In March, DU recognized the Louisiana, South Carolina and Ohio state wildlife agencies for 50 years of supporting waterfowl habitat on the Canadian breeding grounds during a ceremony at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. All three states have participated in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (AFWA) State Contributions to Canada Program since 1965.

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission contributed more than \$10.8 million through the program to enhance and protect habitat in Canada, where many of Louisiana's ducks are produced. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Wildlife invested \$4.1 million in Canadian habi-

tat conservation, and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources has contributed \$2.7 million through 2015.

"Ducks Unlimited commends these states' long and storied history of making wise investments in waterfowl habitat important to the birds that wing their way to them each year," said DU Chief Conservation Officer Paul Schmidt. "Investing their dollars in common breeding grounds provides a great return for the states' waterfowl hunters, wildlife enthusiasts and all those who support conservation."

The AFWA State Contributions to Canada Program is funded by states that understand investments in the breeding grounds pay dividends during the fall flight. Individual state contributions are combined with other state contributions, matched dollar for dollar by DU, then are used as match for North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants secured by DU Canada. These collective investments in Canadian habitat conservation recognize that waterfowl are a continentally shared resource.

"The importance of state contributions to habitat conservation and restoration projects in Canada cannot be overstated," said AFWA's North American Waterfowl Management Plan Coordinator, Dean Smith. "Breeding ground habitat work is critical for the health of continental populations of waterfowl, and waterfowl hunters understand the need to invest in Canadian projects."

Public Policy

DU Promotes The Federal Duck Stamp Act of 2014 And More In FY15



Each year, decisions made on Capitol Hill and legislatures throughout the country have a direct impact on wetland conservation and other programs that advocate for waterfowl populations.

FY15 saw Team DU working diligently to promote various pieces of legislation that are vital to our mission, and to the success of the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign. The Federal Duck Stamp Act of 2014 is one of the main successes for Team DU this year. The duck stamp passed the House of Repre-

sentatives and the Senate with bipartisan support and was then signed into law by the President. It raises the price of the duck stamp from \$15 to \$25, putting more money back into conservation efforts. Our team also continued to push throughout the year for reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act as well as legislation making tax incentives for conservation easements permanent.

Pushing for continued investment and support at the federal and state level

is critical for DU and our mission. Our organization realizes how vital these dollars are for waterfowl, their habitats and the people who value them. This understanding and dedication are part of the reason Ducks Unlimited is the only waterfowl habitat conservation organization with staff based in our nation's capital specifically to educate members of Congress, their staffs, federal agencies and our conservation peers on the importance of wetlands conservation to wildlife and people.

Landmark Conservation Program Turns 30

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced a new general signup period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on Saturday, May 30, during DU's national convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The sign-up period will take place December 1, 2015, through February 26, 2016, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will also grant eligible program participants

a one-year extension option for existing contracts expiring September 30, 2015.

CRP is a voluntary, incentive-based cost-share program administered by USDA that pays landowners an annual rental payment for restoring environmentally sensitive lands back to natural habitat for a 10- to 15-year period. Established in the 1985 Farm Bill, the CRP is recognized as one of the most effective



Tom Vilsack

Federal Duck Stamp

In a major win for wetlands and waterfowl conservation, with the help of dedicated staff and volunteers, the Federal Duck Stamp Act of 2014 passed Congress and was signed into law. December 18, 2014, marked the first time in 23 years that the duck stamp increased in price when the bill was signed by President Obama. Louisiana's Senator David Vitter and Rep. John Fleming introduced both the House and the Senate versions of the Duck Stamp Act of 2014. The bill was championed by many, with

cosponsors from both parties, and ultimately passed with bipartisan support. In a time of intense gridlock, DU was pleased that Democrats and Republicans could come together on vital legislation needed for the future of wetland conservation and waterfowl habitat.

The new law raises the stamp price from \$15 to \$25, increasing the purchasing power generated by the sale of the stamp. Since the federal duck stamp's introduction in 1934, it has raised more than \$800 million and

has conserved more than 6.5 million acres of waterfowl habitat. Approximately 98 cents of every duck stamp dollar is spent acquiring lands for the National Wildlife Refuge System. An additional bill was also introduced and passed that requires the federal duck stamp to be permanently available for purchase online. The online purchasing option for the stamp is one more step for waterfowl hunting to become more accessible to the general public.



photo credit: Gary Kramer

landscape-level conservation programs in U.S. history. This year marks the program's 30-year anniversary.

Secretary Vilsack also announced that an additional 800,000 acres may be enrolled in CRP under specific continuous practices for critical duck nesting habitat found in the Prairie Pothole Region, as well as other important wildlife and wetland habitat nationwide.

"CRP protects water quality and



restores significant habitat for ducks, pheasants, turkey, quail, deer and other important wildlife. That spurs economic development like hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation and tourism all over rural America," said Vilsack.

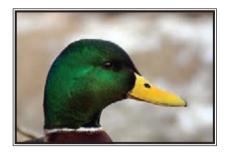
CRP was re-authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill and continues to provide important air, soil, water-quality and wildlife benefits across the country. This landmark program also provides economic stability and support for our nation's agricultural producers.

NAWCA

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) is a voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive-based wildlife conservation program. NAWCA brings together public and private partners and funds to deliver wetland conservation across the continent. Partners include federal, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations like DU and private landowners. Every federal dollar for NAWCA requires a 1:1 match from a non-federal source. Since its introduction, NAWCA projects have been allocated \$1 billion in federal grants — garnering an additional \$3 billion in matching and non-matching funds.

Various bills have been introduced calling for the reauthorization of NAW-CA. In the Senate, Senators Murkowski and Heinrich introduced the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act of 2015, which encompasses a variety of provisions including language calling for NAWCA's reautho-

rization with funding of \$50 million per year through 2020. Ducks Unlimited CEO Dale Hall testified before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in defense of the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act. The House introduced a standalone bill, the North American Wetlands Conser-



vation Extension Act, encompassing the same NAWCA language called for in the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act of 2015 in the Senate.

Funding for NAWCA was included in the omnibus spending bill, which funds the government for FY2016. NAWCA received an increase in funding – totaling \$35,145,000 — an increase of \$1 million from the previous year. DU appreciates the continued support for NAWCA from Congress and awaits final passage reauthorizing this program.

NAWCA also receives permanent funding, not subject to annual appropriations by Congress. Interest from the investments of Pittman-Robertson Funds (PR Funds) is deposited annually into the NAWCA fund to be used in the normal grant making process. This provision expired in September 2015, but language calling for its reauthorization for 10 years was included in the omnibus spending bill. The provision became reauthorized when the omnibus bill was signed into law in December 2015.

Conservation Easements

Congress tackled expired tax provisions, which included tax incentives for conservation easements and Individual Retirement Account charitable giving provisions. In December 2015, a tax extenders bill was passed and signed into law. Provisions included in the bill made charitable giving, like conservation easements, permanent. It raised the maximum deduction a donor could take when donating an easement and increased the amount of years, from six to 16, that a donor can take the deductions. Also, the bill included language making the Individual Retirement Account Charitable Rollover provision permanent. This allows individuals who have reached age 70½ to donate up to \$100,000 to charitable organizations directly from their IRA, without



treating the distribution as taxable income. Both provisions give nonprofit conservation organizations like Ducks Unlimited, greater opportunities for charitable donations, which increases the funds available to restore and protect habitat and open spaces.

DU, along with assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, helped secure funding for voluntary conservation easements on private lands in North and South Dakota. Over the past two years, \$6-8 million annually have been allocated for projects in this region through Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding. The Dakota Grassland Conservation Area is one of the highest priority landscapes for DU and this funding serves as the primary source for this critical area. LWCF was included in the omnibus spending bill, as the program's authorization expired in September 2015. When the omnibus spending bill was signed into law, LWCF was granted authorization for three years (FY16-18) and appropriated \$900 million. For FY16, LWCF was appropriated \$450 million, about a 50 percent increase from 2015.



Conservation Legacy Goal: \$200 Million

It is critical that DU conserves North American wetlands and waterfowl habitat. A financially strong and efficient organization is vital to ensuring DU as a leader in wetlands and waterfowl conservation. Without a strong financial footing, DU will be unable to deliver habitat conservation in our highest priority landscapes or be effective in the public policy arena. For this reason, *Rescue Our Wetlands* includes Conservation Legacy as a priority focused on a strong and stable financial base.

DU spends at least 80 percent of every dollar on habitat conservation and conservation education – few other conservation organizations in America can tout that number. DU must have a strong financial base to help ensure its ability to weather economic downturns, invest in conservation opportunities and support our education, public policy, outreach and scientific research programs.

Planned gifts, estate planning and permanent endowments will all play a major role in providing a strong financial base and allowing DU to achieve its conservation mission.

The Conservation Legacy component of *Rescue Our Wetlands* will recognize planned gift commitments and other gifts to the endowment.

Conservation Legacy is a key component of achieving our lofty goal of \$2 billion for wetland conservation. This portion of the campaign recognizes legacy gifts originating from an estate, or any that are directed to the endowment. These gifts are particularly important as they are truly gifts that keep on giving. The principal of Ducks Unlimited's endowment re-

The Feather Society is DU's recognition program for those who elevate the organization to family status by including DU in their estate plans. In just over 20 years, Ducks Unlimited has received more than \$400 million in expected estate gifts.

mains untouched, and with good stewardship, continues to grow, allowing DU to continue investing these funds in our most critically important conservation needs.

The Feather Society is DU's recognition program for those who elevate the organization to family status by including DU in their estate plans. In just over 20 years, Ducks Unlimited has received more than \$400 million in expected estate gifts.

Ducks Unlimited supporters choose a

variety of ways to make these gifts. Our team works with donors across the country to achieve not only their philanthropic goals of supporting Ducks Unlimited, but, in many cases, also allow for these gifts to help support loved ones. The most popular types of estate gifts come from bequests, life insurance/retirement asset beneficiaries, charitable trusts, and charitable gift annuities.

FY15 was another great year for Feather Society growth. Nearly \$23 million was raised in deferred gifts from 147 of our most dedicated donors. Almost \$4 million in cash was brought in to assist in achieving our conservation goals. The time to consider a conservation legacy is now through *Rescue Our Wetlands*.



Jean Laughlin (left) visits with Max Lehman, area chairman of Greenville, Michigan, Flat River Chapter at the 2015 Michigan State Convention.

Jean Laughlin Carries On Family Love for Waterfowl

A longtime environmental enthusiast, Jean Laughlin grew up with waterfowl and continues to show her support for Ducks Unlimited.

Her father, Russ Bengel, was considered by many to be the father of Ducks Unlimited in Michigan. "He was so active in it that he got us started," she said. "He taught us to enjoy nature and the great outdoors. We spent most of our summers in northern Michigan."

For Laughlin, DU represents a way of life. She and her late husband, Sheldon, backed Ducks Unlimited for decades.

"I like nature, and I know the ducks need marshes," she added.

Her generosity stretches beyond Ducks Unlimited. She has been instrumental in promoting the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, established by her father.

"The purpose is to get kids into the outdoors, and away from cell phones," she said. "Sometimes they don't realize what's out there. When we were kids we were always outside."

Laughlin stays busy attending Michigan state conventions, DU fundraisers and other charitable functions.

"From volunteering on a committee for the local DU chapter, sponsoring events and including DU in her estate plan, Jean is a conservation champion whose legacy for wildlife and waterfowl habitat will endure for generations to come," said Sarah McCallum, director of gift planning for DU's Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office.



Bob and Georgiana Riley

Georgiana and Bob Riley Work Their Pennsylvania Land For Pleasure, Conservation

Georgiana and Bob Riley are the type of supporters that embody the conservation mission of Ducks Unlimited.

For the last 35 years they've owned a farm in Avella, Pennsylvania, with 171 acres evenly split among woodlands, pasture and crops. It's where they've been able to breathe fresh air, where Georgiana has grown a garden and cooked the fruits of her labor and where they've tended to animals ranging from cattle to songbirds.

"We got involved in conservation practices from the get-go," Georgiana said. The farm adheres to United States Department of Agriculture standards and previously was named Conservation Farm of the Year for Washington County, Pennsylvania.

They were drawn to DU when Bob took up waterfowling in retirement. He claims he's a late bloomer with duck hunting, but he's making up for lost time. He's hunted in nearly 25 states and intends to hunt in all 50.

"It's the old saying, 'I came for the birds and stayed for the people.' I enjoy them, and I enjoy watching the sun come up," Bob said.

Their love of DU is tied to the people and the principles.

"It seems the more involved I get in DU the more I appreciate it," Bob said. "The level of education and experience with biologists and engineers and what they do is remarkable. You want to keep supporting and supporting."

The Rileys' support will extend to future generations. They intend to donate their farm to DU with the knowledge the land will be used for education and conservation long after they own it.

"We see it becoming an educational center," Bob said. "You've got the woodlands, birdhouses, and it's a neat place to get people to take a walk and learn."



Conservation Education Goal: \$16 Million

More than 900

vertebrate species benefit from

the wetlands work of DU and

our conservation

partners.

One of the most important aspects of DU's mission, and a stated priority in the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign, is educating society about how our work benefits waterfowl, wildlife, people and ecosystems.

More than 900 vertebrate species benefit from the wetlands work of DU and our conservation partners. Wetlands and associated habitats conserved for waterfowl help ensure adequate water supplies, improve water quality, provide natural beauty and recreational opportunities and help control flooding.

Recruitment based on conserva-

tion education efforts is becoming more important to DU with each passing day. Without consistently filling the "people pipeline," DU's fundraising and membership goals are at long-term risk as we move into our next 78 years.

The Conservation Education component of *Rescue Our Wetlands* will increase resources to educate the public about the importance of wetlands and associated habitats and provide operating resources that support our wetlands conservation projects and programs.



Ducks Unlimited Youth Chapters Growing





In FY14, Ducks Unlimited Varsity and University chapters eclipsed the \$1 million mark in income for the first time in the history of both programs. That trend continued into FY15 as combined event income for the programs reached another benchmark of more than \$1.6 million.

To emulate DU's Sweet 16 program by providing more competition and recognition among high school chapters, the Youth & Education Committee created the Varsity All-Stars program, which features the top 10 DU Varsity chapters in the country. In its debut in FY15, the Varsity All-Stars program competition featured two national champions: South Lafourche High School (Louisiana) and Midway High School

(North Carolina). Each chapter raised more than \$30,000 for DU's conservation mission. In FY15, 38 DU Varsity chapters raised a combined \$308,307, representing 89.2 percent growth in event income over FY14.

Ducks University chapters set records of their own in FY15 by surpassing the \$1 million mark for the second year in a row. Ninety-two collegiate chapters raised a combined \$1.3 million and boasted a 19.3 percent growth in event income over FY14. A new national champion won the Sweet 16 competition as the Tiger Chapter from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, raised more than \$160,000 for the ducks.

Getting Young Conservationists Into The Woods And On The Water



Jim and Ann Cerza

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Jim Cerza's involvement with DU began in the mid-1970s while attending banquets in Richmond, Virginia. Within a few years, he embarked on a volunteer career that's taken him from local committee member to North Carolina State Chairman to national board member.

Jim's commitment to Ducks Unlimited is important to him because he believes in DU's mission of conserving wetlands and wildlife habitat for future generations. In fact, in his second year as North Carolina state chairman, he worked with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission on youth initiatives developing programs aimed at engaging future generations of hunters and DU supporters.

"We wanted to get our youth out from behind their computers and cell phones and get them in the woods and marshes," Jim said. He also coordinated the Bob Timberlake and Richard Childress tribute in 2013 which raised \$135,000 to support youth and education programs.

North Carolina Ducks Unlimited recently instituted the Sportsmen for Tomorrow program, spearheaded by Rodney Warren. The goal is to get kids engaged in the outdoors and with shooting sports. Activities such as wood duck box building, hunter education and general conservation principles are designed to help pass on our hunting heritage and raise money for future programs. With the average age of DU members rising and waterfowl habitat dwindling, it's vital to instill a strong conservation ethic in today's youth.

To continue that legacy, Jim and Ann's most recent upgrade to Benefactor Sponsor will support the Conservation Education priority of the *Rescue Our Wetlands* campaign.

Adopt-A-Team Program Raising Money, Awareness And Competitive Shooters

Youth participation in shooting events such as trap, skeet and sporting clays is on the rise, and for good reason.

Funding from businesses like Midway USA supports youth shooting teams across the country by providing ammo, uniforms, equipment and travel expenses. The Midway USA Foundation's Scholastic Shooting Trust Fund is not only a viable resource for today's shooting teams, but for future generations.

Ducks Unlimited partnered with the Midway USA Foundation's Adopt-A-Team program beginning in 2012 and produced 12 Adopt-A-Team events. The Ducks Unlimited/Midway USA Foundation Adopt-A-Team program allows participating DU chapters to raise funds for DU's conservation mission and a youth shooting team or club of the chapter's choosing through funds donated by the Midway Foundation Scholastic Shooting Trust Fund. All DU chapters are eligible to participate in this program.

The Midway USA Foundation's Scholastic Shooting Trust Fund is not only a viable resource for today's shooting teams, but for future generations.

Participating DU chapters work with their respective regional directors to establish an Adopt-A-Team event. DU chapters partner with a shooting team or club to sell tickets for a chance to win a designated firearm. DU chapters receive full credit for their fundraising efforts, but proceeds remitted to the Midway USA Foundation are divided equally between Ducks Unlimited and the trust established for the beneficiary shooting team.

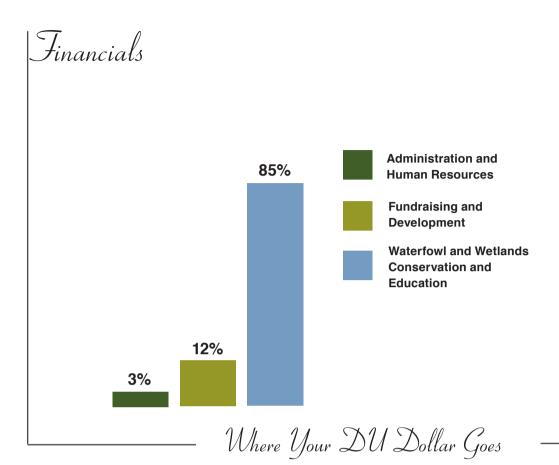
Since 2012, the Ducks Unlimited/Midway

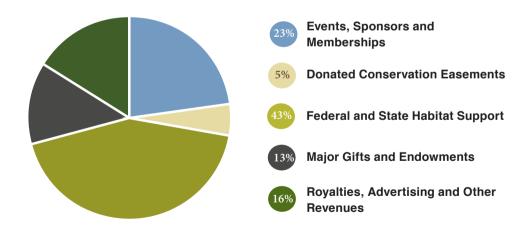
USA Foundation Adopt-A-Team program has grown by 13 new events per year. Program growth at the chapter level can be attributed to the multiple benefits the program offers such as the opportunity for DU chapters to not only support their local youth shooting teams or clubs, but also the ducks.

For more information or to participate, contact Ducks Unlimited Manager of Youth & Education Programs Mark Horobetz at mhorobetz@ducks.org.









Sources Of Support And Revenue

Ducks Unlimited, Inc. and Affiliate Combined Balance Sheets June 30, 2015 and 2014

Assets	2015		2014	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$	16,810,707	26,279,911	
Restricted cash		5,816,981	3,203,721	
Events receivable, net		922,222	822,853	
Pledges receivable, net		32,579,176	29,542,587	
Habitat conservation and other receivables		25,769,630	26,789,720	
Event merchandise inventory		4,982,204	3,427,239	
Investments		52,755,511	48,424,054	
Land held for conservation purposes		42,018,172	34,094,050	
Land, buildings, and equipment, net		22,407,537	8,596,084	
Other assets	_	3,422,157	2,559,301	
Total assets	\$ _	207,484,297	183,739,520	
Liabilities and Net Assets				
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$	13,129,445	16,567,330	
Compensation and related accruals		8,038,536	7,003,666	
Pension and deferred compensation accruals		8,227,469	3,764,636	
Accrued postretirement benefits		1,012,637	1,571,445	
Other liabilities	_	471,966	499,975	
Total liabilities	_	30,880,053	29,407,052	
Net assets:				
Unrestricted		67,220,750	59,780,062	
Temporarily restricted		90,218,589	80,585,509	
Permanently restricted	_	19,164,905	13,966,897	
Total net assets	_	176,604,244	154,332,468	
Total liabilities and net assets	\$	207,484,297	183,739,520	



photo credit: Gary Kramer



Ducks Unlimited, Inc. and Affiliate Condensed Statement of Unrestricted Operations Years Ended June 30, 2015 and 2014

	_	2015	 2014
Support and Revenue:			
Philanthropic sources:			
Net proceeds from committee events	\$	42,276,520	40,928,409
Direct response membership		12,167,143	12,735,445
Use of major gifts		27,604,906	23,859,653
Planned gift maturities		1,000,000	1,000,000
Royalties	_	2,973,370	 2,247,302
Total philanthropic revenue		86,021,939	80,770,809
Other support and revenue:			
Federal and state habitat reimbursements		69,391,154	65,085,331
Nongovernmental partnerships		29,578,001	21,180,520
State grants		3,209,003	3,125,021
Donated conservation easements		11,423,798	10,047,750
Advertising revenue		2,461,132	2,422,323
Donated educational programming		29,363,853	4,371,270
Non-operating revenues		5,573,481	11,132,571
Appropriated endowment and quasi-endowment earnings		1,200,438	1,114,549
Other revenues	_	94,317	 184,346
Total support and revenue	_	238,317,116	 199,434,490
Operational expense:			
Program service expenses		193,890,630	153,521,743
Fund-raising expenses		28,060,888	28,361,294
Administration expenses	_	5,683,866	 6,012,432
Total operational expense	_	227,635,384	 187,895,469
Excess of unrestricted support and revenues over expenses	\$ _	10,681,732	\$ 11,539,021