

# NEW ENGLAND

great lakes/atlantic region • 2016 conservation report

## DU AND PARTNERS WORK TO RESTORE HERRING RIVER ESTUARY

**D**ucks Unlimited is proud to partner with Friends of the Herring River to help restore one of the largest and most productive salt marsh estuaries in New England.

Spanning more than 1,000 acres and six miles of waterways, the Herring River in Wellfleet and Truro, Massachusetts, once supported a vibrant wetland and coastal river ecosystem in the Gulf of Maine and hosted one of the most important fish runs on Outer Cape Cod.

Construction of a dike across the mouth of the river in 1909 and other alterations to the river's hydrology eliminated tidal flow, drained the salt marshes and transformed the estuary into one of Cape Cod's most degraded natural resources.

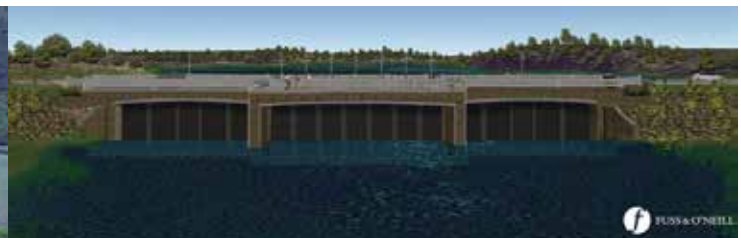
Federal, state, local and non-government partners have spent 30 years documenting the ecological damage caused by these alterations. Under a 2007 memorandum of understanding between the Cape Cod National Seashore and the Towns of Wellfleet and Truro, the Herring River Restoration Committee was established and developed an environmental impact statement and report and a detailed restoration plan to restore tidal flow to the estuary.

The \$44 million project involves constructing a bridge with tidal control gates to replace the present dike at Chequesset Neck Road; additional water control structures to protect private properties in the Mill Creek and Pole Dike Creek Basins; removal of 1,000 feet of abandoned road across the interior marsh, elevation of more than 1.7 miles of public roads above restored tidal elevations and implementation of flood mitigation measures to protect several low-lying structures from higher water levels.

Construction is expected to begin in 2017 and conclude in 2020. Once completed, tidal exchange will be managed and increased over time.

Sarah Fleming, DU's manager of conservation programs for the North Atlantic, said Ducks Unlimited is a project partner and at this phase is offering technical assistance. She is looking forward to further helping the project as it gets closer to construction. "This is a huge wintering area for American black ducks, one of our species of concern in this region," she said.

Friends of Herring River was established in 2009 to promote the restoration of the estuary and support the restoration efforts in cooperation with the Towns of Wellfleet and Truro and the Cape Cod National Seashore.



*Left: View of the Herring River Estuary (courtesy of Friends of the Herring River). Right: Rendering of the proposed updates to the Herring River in Massachusetts (courtesy of Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.).*

## WETLAND RESTORATION CONTINUES AT RHODE ISLAND WILDLIFE IMPOUNDMENTS

*T*wo important coastal wetland areas with public recreational access will see habitat improvements in 2016.

Nearly 200 acres at Great Swamp Management Area and Woody Hill Management Area in Washington County are being restored. If all goes as planned, the areas will be ready for fall 2016 hunting season.

Ducks Unlimited is partnering with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) - Division of Fish & Wildlife to replace two water control structures in these management areas. The project will be funded with federal and state funding, and Ducks Unlimited matching funds.

The water control structures are hampered by beaver dams and are blocked with mud and debris. Installing new structures will allow state land managers to raise and lower water levels to mimic natural water cycles, restoring healthy wetland habitat with diverse aquatic vegetation. These areas will become valuable waterfowl staging sites especially for black ducks and mallards within six miles of the coast.

The project sites are at state-owned wildlife management areas managed by the RIDEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife. These properties are open to the public year-round for passive recreation and are open to all forms of legal hunting when regulations permit.



*One of the water control structures, overrun by beaver dam activity, awaits replacement this year in coastal Rhode Island.*

## AMERICAN WATERFOWL POPULATIONS BENEFIT FROM CANADIAN HABITAT PROJECTS

*M*any waterfowl enthusiasts may never travel to Canada, but ducks do.

The breeding populations of waterfowl in Ontario and Quebec can translate into a fall flight of approximately 20 million ducks and geese. And 64 percent of the world's population of American black ducks breed in Quebec. More than 39 rare and endangered wetland-dependent wildlife species will benefit from long-term protection of Ontario's coastal wetland habitats.

Canada is a vital breeding landscape and part of DU's Completing the Cycle Initiative. Because of that, DU and Ducks Unlimited Canada partner on the State Grants Program, which provides state funding for critical habitat conservation north in Boreal Canada.

The state grant program has funded wetland conservation programs in high priority areas across Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador for more than 50 years. Funding from the states is matched by Ducks Unlimited, matched again by federal funding through the North American Wetland Conservation Act and then leveraged by Canadian funding partners.



*Aerial view of Baie Lavallière and the St. Louis Marsh Restoration Project within the St. Lawrence Plain Priority Area of Quebec, one of numerous Canadian projects benefitting the Atlantic Flyway.*

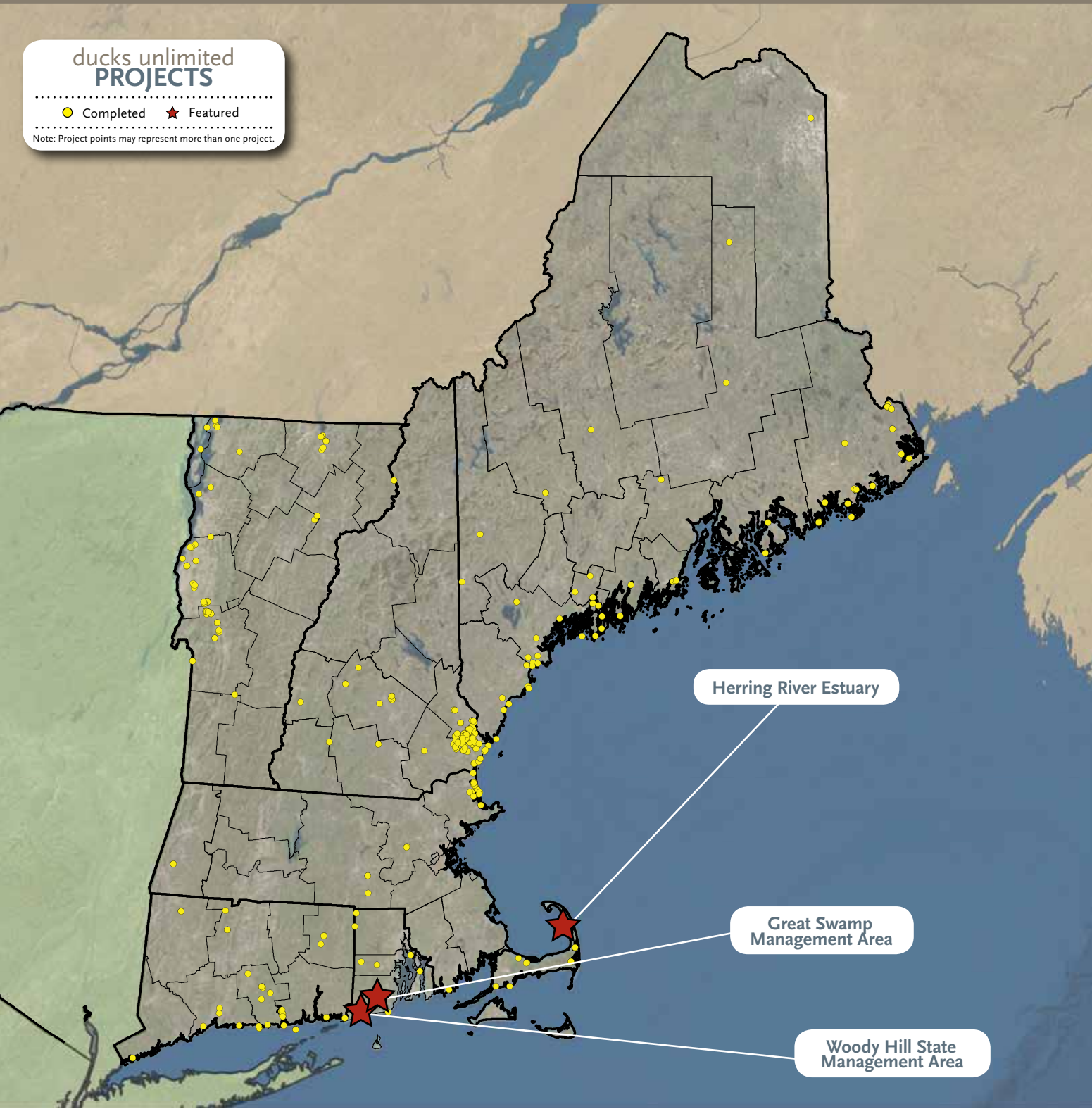
Since 1965, the grants program in the United States' portion of the Atlantic Flyway has contributed nearly \$10 million toward conservation efforts in Canada. These contributions have been leveraged at least four times totaling more than \$40 million invested into our boreal waterfowl breeding grounds.

In Canada, DU has completed more than 9,560 habitat projects, securing 6.4 million acres and positively influencing 116 million acres of habitat. More than 900 species of wetland wildlife, including many threatened or endangered species, live and flourish on DU projects.

ducks unlimited  
**PROJECTS**

● Completed ★ Featured

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.



**MEET YOUR NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATION STAFF**



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## DU TO USE GRANT TO RESEARCH DRONES AND ENERGY USE FOR NEW ENGLAND WATERFOWL

Ducks Unlimited recently received a \$100,000 grant from Waterfowl Research Foundation to support two regional research projects in the Completing the Cycle initiative area, and Atlantic Flyway regions.

Of the grant, \$85,000 was awarded to support DU Biologist Jake McPherson's project, which is working to determine how much energy a duck needs to swim, dive, fly and eat. That information is important as DU plans how to best restore and protect habitat which provides food for migrating and staging waterfowl.

DU has partnered with the University of Delaware and U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center to investigate how much energy a duck requires. Using state-of-the art equipment to measure oxygen consumption, researchers will isolate specific behaviors and their energy demands in captive American black ducks and lesser scaup.

The remaining \$15,000 was awarded to support a new project, which will study the accuracy and ability to count ducks using unmanned aerial systems, otherwise known as drones. Scientists currently use airplanes to count ducks, but the study will determine if drones can get accurate numbers without disturbing the ducks.

"Planes are expensive and often are not feasible for counting waterfowl, in areas that are dense - we often can't get low enough" said John Coluccy, manager of conservation planning for Ducks Unlimited's Great Lakes/Atlantic Region. "With drones, refuge managers could do weekly surveys in the fall or year-round."

## DU VERMONT IN-LIEU FEE PROGRAM

Ducks Unlimited's Vermont In-Lieu Fee Program was created in 2011 to provide a third-party mitigation option for organizations or companies applying for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation development permits. Instead of a permit applicants restore wetlands to compensate for disturbing wetlands for development, they can buy credits from DU which are used toward restoring wetlands within the same watershed.

The in-lieu fee program has sold credits to compensate for stream and wetland impacts in the Lake Champlain - Richelieu River basin. DU evaluated an extensive list of potential mitigation sites, and identified one at the confluence of the Richelieu River and Middlebury River. A preliminary mitigation plan has been drafted to re-establish 44 acres of forested wetlands, preserve 44 acres of forested wetlands and rehabilitate 40 acres of emergent wetlands.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The New England states are part of Ducks Unlimited's 21-state Great Lakes/Atlantic Region, a diverse landscape of habitats ranging from Prairie Potholes in the Midwest to coastal estuaries in the Atlantic Flyway.

Waterfowl know no boundaries. Because of that, conservation work done in New England in 2015 was a pivotal part of the overall wetland management strategy DU has established based on conservation science.

Ducks Unlimited had a record year of support and acres conserved. Here in the Great Lakes/Atlantic Region, DU in 2015 used private donations and public funds to invest \$27,193,473 in conservation projects. That strong support enabled our biologists and engineers to deliver focused, effective habitat conservation on 12,686 acres of wetlands.

The work contained in this report reflects Ducks Unlimited's commitment to New England. We appreciate your support and are eager to build on this success in 2016.



David Brakhage  
GLARO Director of Operations

Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.



**GREAT LAKES /  
ATLANTIC REGION**

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