



# IOWA

great lakes/atlantic region • 2016 state conservation report

## MARBLE-HOTTES LAKES ENHANCEMENT PROJECT COMPLETED

*D*ucks Unlimited in 2015 wrapped up a project that will boost water quality and improve hunting habitat for Dickinson County residents.

The Marble-Hottes Lakes Enhancement project is complete, which is important for waterfowl and water quality. Nearly 20 percent of the water that enters Iowa’s largest natural lake, Big Spirit Lake, flows through the Marble-Hottes Lakes system.

“For the communities of Big Spirit Lake, water quality is huge,” said DU Iowa Biologist Mike Shannon. “It’s a resort area that is based on water recreation. This project was a high priority for area residents.”

Last year Ducks Unlimited installed new pump facilities and a fish screen that will transform the shallow water areas of the lake from murky, open water to stands of emergent vegetation such as cattail and bulrush.

This project enhanced more than 450 acres of emergent marsh and provided better hunting and fishing opportunities on these popular lakes.

The lake system gets heavy use by early migrating waterfowl and is popular with teal hunters. The lakes are in draw down now to promote healthy wetland vegetation and will be allowed to refill in late summer/fall 2016.

The project began as part of a Ducks Unlimited-Iowa Department of Natural Resources Shallow Lakes partnership and grew into a collaborative effort with many partners and community support.

Marble-Hottes was a true community effort, with support coming from Iowa DNR, the Dickinson County Water Quality Commission, the Waitt-Carlton Family Foundation, Ducks Unlimited supporters, the Clean Water Alliance and the North American Wetland Conservation Act.



*The Marble – Hottes Lakes Enhancement Project benefits wildlife, water quality, fisheries, paddling, recreation and aesthetics.*

## MAYNARD-REESE WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA RESTORED

*DU* restored a series of historic prairie potholes on a 240-acre tract in Kossuth County.

The Ducks Unlimited project on Maynard-Reese included breaking drainage tile and constructing berms to restore six wetlands. The goal is to increase habitat for breeding pairs, increase the number of nesting waterfowl and restore semi-permanent habitat for broods.

The Maynard-Reese project is helping create a pothole complex around Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge to increase the population of breeding waterfowl. The upland area also offers strong pheasant hunting opportunities.

Funding came from a NAWCA grant, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Pheasants Forever.

“These are all about producing waterfowl,” said Iowa DU Biologist Mike Shannon. “Grasslands dotted with small wetland basins are very attractive to nesting pairs.

## PARTNERSHIPS PRESERVE RICE LAKE

*The* Living Lakes Initiative area that includes north central Iowa is a top priority for Ducks Unlimited conservation efforts. Partnerships enable restoration efforts on these high duck use areas, and Rice Lake is no exception.

DU worked with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to enhance the 1,020-acre lake in Winnebago County and enable water depth management. The lake in recent years has kept a constant water level with some deeper areas. This lack of water level fluctuation discouraged waterfowl-attractive vegetation from growing.

During the drought in 2013 water levels naturally dropped. The DNR took advantage of this to further drain the lake. A strong response in plant variety and quantity meant a great duck response that fall.

In 2015 DU installed a water control structure on the lake that will allow the DNR to continue raising and lowering water levels to mimic natural hydrology cycles.

Based on past experience, fish growth should be extraordinary and offer some great walleye and perch fishing in just a couple years.



## GRANTS BEING SECURED FOR IOWA LIVING LAKES INITIATIVE

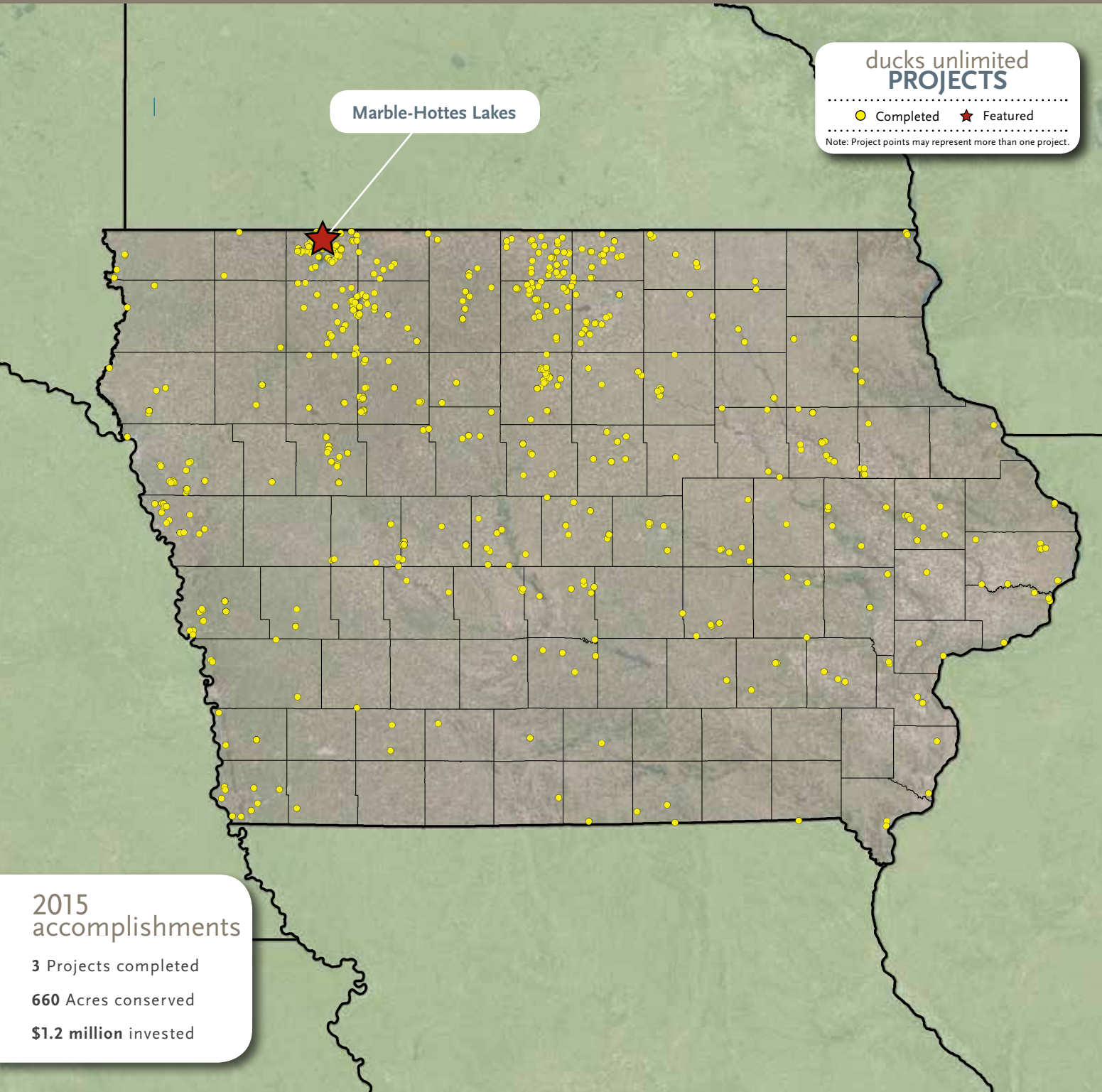
*DU* was awarded one North American Wetland Conservation Act grant and one local grant in northwest Iowa for our Living Lakes Initiative.

### • Upper Iowa Prairie Pothole IV NAWCA project

DU has been recommended for a \$1 million grant with \$2.5 million in state and private matching dollars. The grant will be used by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and county conservation boards to acquire six tracts totaling 750 acres in Dickinson, Clay and Pocahontas Counties. All tracts offer public access, and five of the six are open to hunting. Also as part of the grant, DU will enhance 600 acres in Dickinson and Emmett Counties. Once the grant is finalized, construction would begin next fall and run through 2017.

### • Dickinson County Shallow Lakes Enhancement – Phase 2

DU and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources received a \$90,000 grant from the Dickinson County Water Quality Commission. The grant will allow acquisition of a 44-acre tract of the Garlock Slough Watershed and a highly visible 40-acre tract surrounding West-Hottes Lake. Both projects will further enhance valuable wetland complexes for waterfowl and water quality.



MEET YOUR IOWA CONSERVATION STAFF



**Mike Shannon**  
*Regional Biologist*  
2003 Benton Street  
Boone, IA 50036

541.891.5047  
[mshannon@ducks.org](mailto:mshannon@ducks.org)



**Rick Verchota, P.E.**  
*Engineer II*  
1591 Cameo Road  
Nora Springs, IA 50458

641.420.6908  
[rverchota@ducks.org](mailto:rverchota@ducks.org)

## PROGRESS MADE ON MIGRATION HABITAT IN SOUTHEAST IOWA

Cone Marsh in Louisa County is DU's first significant Big River Initiative project in Iowa.

The existing wetland is not living up to its full potential for waterfowl and wetland habitat, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is having a difficult time managing water levels.

The 500-acre marsh provides food for migrating birds. DU is installing a water control structure to improve that foraging habitat during spring and fall.

Survey work is completed, and the project was being designed this winter. Construction is expected to begin in 2016 and project completion is scheduled for later this year.



## HELP DU CONVINCING LAWMAKERS TO LAUNCH CRITICAL IOWA NATURAL RESOURCES FUND

You can help Iowa get about \$180 million annually to conserve shrinking natural resources and protect waterfowl habitat.

The Iowa Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund was approved by voters in 2010. The fund is designed to protect against serious problems including loss of wildlife habitat, soil erosion, flooding, water pollution and cuts in state park funding.

However, state legislators have yet to put money into the trust. Voters approved a 3/8 of 1 percent sales tax increase, which would provide permanent dollars toward improving Iowa's outdoor heritage. The average Iowa family will pay less than \$1 per week to fund the trust.

Less than 10 percent of Iowa's wetlands remain. The trust will ensure thriving wildlife habitats, productive agricultural soils and clean water for generations to come.

Ducks Unlimited and a diverse group of organizations are working to get lawmakers to fund the trust.

What can you do? Contact your legislators and encourage them to "Fund the Trust." DU also has an incentive program that rewards people for meeting, calling or writing to their legislator. To learn how, and to view sample emails to send your legislator, visit [www.ducks.org/iowa](http://www.ducks.org/iowa).



### A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Iowa is 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 Iowa 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 in 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 12,791 acres of wetlands.

The work contained in this report reflects Ducks Unlimited's commitment to Iowa. 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**

1220 Eisenhower Place, Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734.623.2000 • 734.623.2035 (Fax)