

# MINNESOTA

great lakes/atlantic region • 2016 state conservation report

## RECORD CONSERVATION WORK IN 2015 FOR WATERFOWL, RECREATIONAL ACCESS

*I*n 2015 Ducks Unlimited changed the face of Minnesota landscape to benefit waterfowl, wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. DU delivered a record number of conservation projects, affecting 33,641 acres of waterfowl habitat with an investment of more than \$6 million.

### 2015 AT A GLANCE

#### Shallow lake enhancement

Six shallow lake projects totaling 1,236 acres on state Wildlife Management Areas or land under easement by Minnesota DNR:

- **Eagle Lake**, 409 acres, Ras-Lyn Wildlife Management Area, McLeod County
- **Mud Lake**, 253 acres, Erlandson Wildlife Management Area, Otter Tail County
- **Cedar Lake**, 243 acres, Stearns County
- **Pickerel Lake**, 148 acres, Chen Bay Wildlife Management Area, Lincoln County
- **Lake 14**, 48 acres, Klages Wildlife Management Area, Big Stone County
- **Sioux Valley Wildlife Management Area**, 135 acres, Jackson County

#### Wild rice lakes

In northern forested Minnesota, DU continued its partnership with Minnesota DNR to manage the outlets of 103 wild rice lakes totaling 27,349 acres. This management keeps these vital waterfowl food sources clear of beaver dams and

other debris, which promotes natural lake hydrology, wild rice plant and seed growth.

#### Land acquisition

In southern prairie Minnesota, DU completed two land purchases that will benefit public recreational access. This land, now open for public hunting, eventually will be transferred to Minnesota DNR:

- **Swessinger Wildlife Management Area** - 640 acres in Nobles County. DU bought the fully one-square-mile section of land to improve wildlife habitat. Formerly rolling prairie with many small wetlands in the heart of Prairie Pothole Region, today remains nearly 90% agricultural land. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, once restored the land has the capability to triple the area's breeding duck population.
- **Sanborn Lake Wildlife Management Area** - 75 acres in Le Sueur County. This parcel will be restored to prairie in spring 2016 and transferred to the state of Minnesota.

#### Private land conservation

DU's partnership continued with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources. In 2015 seven DU conservation consultants helped deliver restorations on Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) - Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easements:

- 53 RIM-WRP private land easements
- 1,677 wetland acres restored
- 2,603 prairie upland acres restored
- Total of 4,240 acres restored in the Prairie Pothole Region of western and southern Minnesota, a primary breeding area for ducks in North America.



Panoramic photo of DU's work at Eagle Lake in McLeod County.

## EAGLE LAKE: MINNESOTA DNR'S 50TH DESIGNATED WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT LAKE ENHANCED

*H*abitat and wildlife rebounded in 2015 at Eagle Lake on the Raslyn Wildlife Management Area in McLeod County.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 2014 designated Eagle Lake as the state's 50th Wildlife Management Lake, which allows the state to temporarily lower water levels to encourage aquatic plant growth, remove invasive fish and improve water quality.



**Eagle Lake**  
Minnesota's 50th Designated Wildlife Lake!  
Project Supporters Include:  
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.  
Buffalo Creek Watershed District  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Minnesota's Outdoor Heritage Fund  
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council  
Flint Hills Resources  
Unimin Corporation  
The McKnight Foundation  
Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation  
Ducks Unlimited Members and Major Sponsors  
**Thank You!**

In early 2015, Ducks Unlimited built a water control structure to manipulate water levels. The Minnesota DNR used the structure to draw down water levels in spring and summer 2015.

Shallow water, mudflats and large numbers of ducks and shorebirds responded immediately. Aquatic plants began to germinate and grow as the summer progressed.

Water levels were kept low in fall 2015, but will slowly be restored throughout 2016. The lake should be full again in 2017.

## STATE LINE LAKE ENHANCEMENTS BENEFIT WILDLIFE, RECREATION

*D*ucks Unlimited and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources joined with local partners July 18, to celebrate the successful enhancement of 446-acre State Line Lake in Freeborn County.

For decades, State Line Lake was in poor condition. High water levels and invasive carp degraded water quality and the aquatic ecology to the point the water was too turbid to support wildlife habitat and provide outdoor recreational opportunities.

To remedy the situation, DU purchased a 45-acre parcel of land on the lake's outlet. DU engineered and installed a new weir to control water levels and a fish barrier to prevent the re-infestation of carp in the lake in 2013.

Minnesota DNR used the structures in 2014 to temporarily lower water levels in the lake, which rejuvenated aquatic plants and invertebrates. The draw down helped consolidate sediment and nutrients and kill invasive fish during winter months. Water levels were restored this spring. The water is clear and supporting aquatic life again, including waterfowl and other wetland-dependent migratory birds.

The shallow lake enhancement project was funded through a state appropriation from the Outdoor Heritage Fund as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, and by philanthropic investments by DU major sponsors.

Other project partners included State Line Lake Restoration, Inc., Freeborn County, City of Emmons, Iowa DNR, Worth County Conservation Board, Shell Rock River Watershed District, the Brackey Family, Unimin Corporation, Flint Hills Resources, and dozens of individual DU Living Lakes Initiative Major Sponsors.

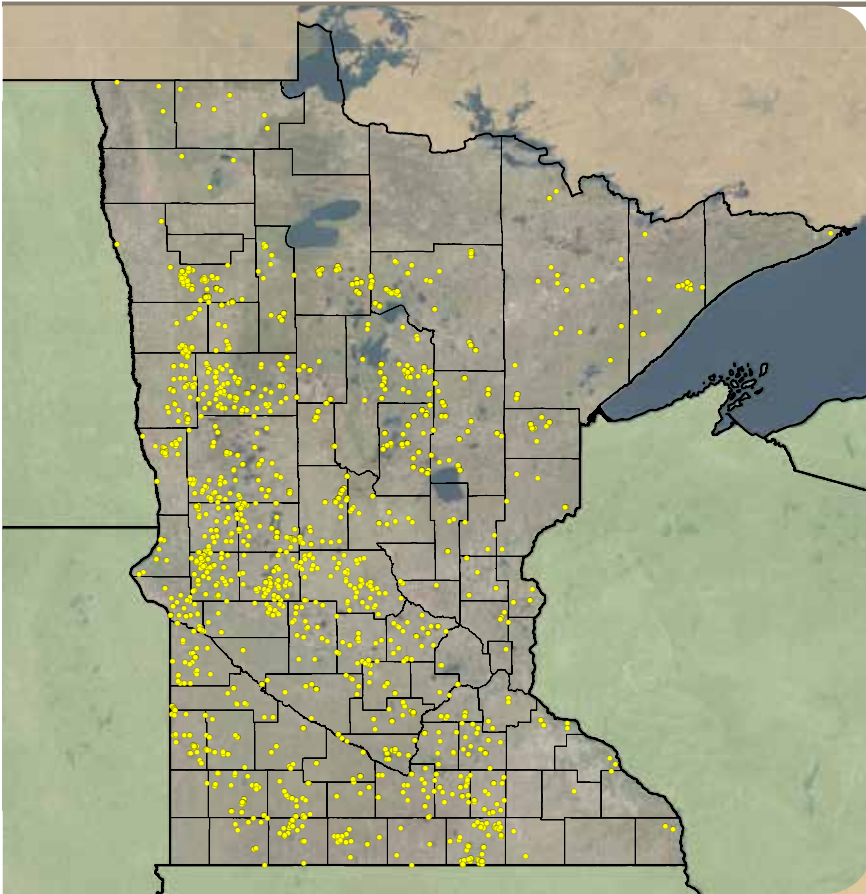




# ducks unlimited PROJECTS

● Completed DU projects to date

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.



## 2015 MINNESOTA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

6 engineering projects enhancing **1,236 acres**

**4,341 acres** restored on private land RIM-WRP easements

2 fee-title land acquisitions protecting **715 acres**

**103** wild rice lakes managed to enhance **27,349 acres**

The vision of the Living Lakes Initiative is to enhance, restore, and protect stepping stones of managed shallow lakes and wetlands from central Iowa through northern Minnesota to provide high quality aquatic food and habitat resources for migrating and breeding waterfowl. Living Lakes helps preserve our rich waterfowling heritage and augments conservation of the Prairie Pothole Region.

For more information contact Director of Development, Adam DeHaan, [adehaan@ducks.org](mailto:adehaan@ducks.org) or (763) 688-0519

## MEET YOUR MINNESOTA CONSERVATION STAFF



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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

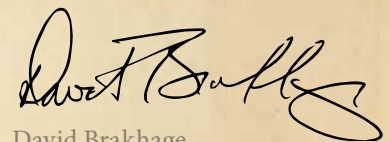
Minnesota is part of Ducks Unlimited's 21-state Great Lakes/Atlantic Region, a diverse landscape of habitats ranging from Prairie Potholes in the Midwest to coastal estuaries in the Atlantic Flyway.

Waterfowl know no boundaries. Because of that, conservation work done in Minnesota 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 and 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 Minnesota. We appreciate your support and are eager to build on this success in 2016.



  
David Brakhage  
GLARO Director of Operations

## DU NAMES VORLAND MINNESOTA CONSERVATION PARTNER OF THE YEAR



Ducks Unlimited awarded the 2015 Minnesota Conservation Partner of the Year Award to Jeanine Vorland, area wildlife supervisor for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Owatonna Area. The presentation was made July 18 during Minnesota Ducks Unlimited's summer State Council meeting in Emmons, Minn., by DU's Minnesota State Chairman Brian Ross and Minnesota Conservation Program Manager Jon Schneider.

Since 2004, when DU launched its Living Lakes conservation initiative in Minnesota and Iowa, Vorland has been instrumental in leading the enhancement of eight shallow lakes in cooperation with DU that improved nearly 6,000 acres of wetland habitat for migrating and breeding waterfowl. Vorland has also partnered with DU to restore several smaller wetlands and acquire public land, and has several new shallow lake enhancement projects planned for the future.

## FOUNDATIONS, GROUPS PROVIDE KEY GIFTS FOR LIVING LAKES CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Generous funding from several private philanthropic foundations helped Ducks Unlimited leverage state and federal public grants and implement multiple shallow lake enhancement, land protection, and wetland restoration projects in 2015:

- Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation
- Caterpillar Foundation
- Fox Lake Conservation League
- Gopher Campfire Club
- Howard Lake Sportsman's Club
- Longview Foundation
- The McKnight Foundation
- Ross and Pauline Strehlow Family Foundation
- Van Sloun Foundation



THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

## CORPORATIONS CONTINUE SUPPORTING LIVING LAKES CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Flint Hills Resources has supported Ducks Unlimited since 1985, including pledging more than \$500,000 since 2007.

In 2015, Flint Hills Resources continued their leadership support with another \$75,000 gift to DU.

Unimin Corporation has supported the Living Lakes Initiative with gifts totaling \$190,000.



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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