

The America's River Initiative seeks to restore the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley through habitat conservation, science and policy that secures wintering, migration and breeding habitat for millions of waterfowl and reinforces the region's rich waterfowling legacy. It also supports conservation on the breeding grounds most important to Mississippi Flyway waterfowl. The America's River Initiative is a crucial part of Ducks Unlimited's Rescue Our Wetlands Campaign, a seven-year, \$2 billion effort aimed at changing the face of conservation in North America. Rescue Our Wetlands is the largest wetlands and waterfowl conservation campaign in history.



MAJOR SPONSOR REPORT

Congratulations to the Mississippi State Campaign Committee! They achieved Top 10 results in 2015! Led by Scott Forrest, Mississippi finished in a tie for 10th place. Their accomplishments were impressive, including 16 new Life Sponsors, 12 upgrades and 6 new Feather Society commitments. In addition, this team secured more than \$265,000 in new cash to benefit DU's highest conservation priorities. Clearly, major sponsors in Mississippi are making a difference for the future of wetlands, waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

One such donor is Bobby Massey, the Southern Region's Director of Conservation Services. A member of the DU conservation staff, Bobby has committed to becoming a Diamond Life and Grand Slam Life Sponsor. Bobby grew up in the Mississippi Delta, and he knows well the importance of wetland conservation in the Magnolia State.

"I believe in Ducks Unlimited. I work for DU and I know how dedicated this organization, its staff, sponsors and volunteers are to habitat conservation," Bobby said. "I'm thankful to be a part of that mission in my work every day, but I also want to support DU as a sponsor. I have two grandkids, and I want them to experience the natural wonders of wetlands and waterfowl I grew up seeing in the Mississippi Delta."



CONSERVATION UPDATE

Ducks Unlimited's conservation priorities in Mississippi focus on protection, restoration and enhancement of forested wetlands, seasonally flooded wetlands and flooded agricultural crops. Guided by these priorities, DU's conservation staff continues to make significant strides for conservation in Mississippi. In fiscal year (FY) 2015, DU and its Mississippi partners conserved more than 1,500 acres, bringing our long-term conservation progress in Mississippi to more than 309,400 acres conserved. Recent public land projects involved restoration at Morgan Brake, Hillside, Coldwater River, Yazoo and Panther Swamp national wildlife refuges and Indianola Wildlife Management Area. DU's goal is to secure the future of Mississippi as a key migration area for waterfowl in North America.



VOLUNTEER REPORT

Volunteers are the heartbeat of Ducks Unlimited, and Mississippi has some of the best. Mississippi boasts nearly 9,072 members, including 1,136 volunteers who hosted 51 events in 2015, raising more than \$918,000 to support DU's conservation mission. Those dollars allow DU to complete critical conservation work not only within the Magnolia State, but also on the breeding grounds that produce Mississippi's waterfowl.

The road to becoming a DU volunteer is almost always one you're put on by a friend. For Caleb Shelly, his uncle, Managing Director of Development Chad Manlove, introduced him to Mississippi Delta duck hunting, emphasized the importance of conservation, and encouraged him to get engaged with Ducks Unlimited. So in 2013, Caleb founded the first varsity chapter in the state. He continues to chair the Amory High School chapter and credits the 15 guys and girls on the committee with tremendous dedication and energy for conservation.

In their first two events, the chapter raised more than \$18,000. The 2014 banquet earned the Amory High chapter a place in the top 10 Varsity fundraising chapters in the nation. Their third event, held in December 2015, raised \$8,750, bringing the young chapter's contributions to conservation up to \$26,800. These young men and women remind us that there is no age limit on making a difference for conservation!

Caleb will be graduating in May, and has plans to go to Itawamba Community College in the fall of 2016.



Caleb and his dad, Robert, enjoy hunting together.

RICE STEWARDSHIP PARTNERSHIP

The USA Rice-Ducks Unlimited Rice Stewardship Partnership continues to yield results for Mississippi rice growers. Our \$10-million national Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is largely dedicated to cost-share incentives for producers to implement conservation practices on their lands through Farm Bill programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the most relevant program to irrigated agriculture. In addition to the RCPP grant, new grants from the Walmart Foundation and the Mosaic Company Foundation will support our "boots-on-the-ground" delivery mechanism to provide professional advice to interested landowners in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley.



Rice Stewardship funders include the USDA NRCS, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Walmart Foundation, the Mosaic Company Foundation, Chevron U.S.A., Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation, Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, RiceTec, BASF, American Rice, Inc. – Riviana Foods, Inc., Farmers Rice Milling Company, Turner's Creek & Bombay Hook Farms and MacDon Industries.

The time to
Rescue Our
Wetlands
is right now!

Band together with us today.

To find out more ways you can help Rescue Our Wetlands through our regional initiatives, visit www.ducks.org/rescue or contact Ducks Unlimited at 601-956-1936



**SOUTHERN
REGION**

COLDWATER RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IMPROVED

Working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DU recently completed a habitat enhancement project on the Coldwater River National Wildlife Refuge in northwest Mississippi. Coldwater is managed as part of the North Mississippi Refuges Complex, which consists of Dahomey, Tallahatchie, and Coldwater River national wildlife refuges. We restored and added water management infrastructure to optimize habitat management capabilities for the refuge staff on 263 acres of emergent wetland habitat. This area is important for wintering waterfowl and provides additional hunting opportunities in the Mississippi Delta. The project was funded by Wetlands America Trust past president and current trustee Jim Kennedy.

