

# MISSOURI

great lakes/atlantic region • 2016 state conservation report

## INVESTMENT IN CONFLUENCE FOCUS AREA BRINGS TRIPLE REWARDS

Where the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri Rivers meet is the beginning of North America's greatest floodplain, forming a unique wetland system known as the Confluence Floodplain.

Acknowledging the importance of this area, Ducks Unlimited in 2003 established the "Confluence Focus Area" as one of DU's priority conservation regions. Over the last 13 years, DU has worked with conservation partners and volunteer landowners to secure conservation easements on 29 tracts totaling 9,005 acres of high quality wetland habitat in Missouri's portion of the confluence area.

"The confluence region is one of the most important privately owned wetland complexes in the nation," said Mark Flaspohler, DU's manager of conservation programs in Missouri. "The habitat provides critically important migration habitat for more than 250 species of waterfowl, wading birds and migrant songbirds."

Ducks Unlimited's easement program in Missouri remains strong. In the past year we added two new donated easements totaling more than 1,000 acres. Conservation easements benefit landowners and conservation partners and help to secure the future and heritage of wetland and waterfowl conservation in Missouri. Conservation easements in the region do triple duty by providing long-term protection of important resting and wintering grounds, offering significant tax benefits to landowners and producing large amounts of critical match for securing additional grant funds.

Since 2003, DU and conservation partners have leveraged private and public funds, along with conservation easements, to secure nine North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants at \$1 million each. Those grants have protected, enhanced or restored an additional 30,000 acres of high quality wetland related habitats on predominantly public lands in Missouri.



*Ducks Unlimited is actively protecting thousands of acres of wetlands in the confluence of the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri Rivers.*

## MINGO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE RECREATIONAL, WILDLIFE OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE

*D*ucks Unlimited in 2016 will use a \$1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant to boost Mingo National Wildlife Refuge for wildlife and recreational use.

Mingo is in southeast Missouri, about 150 miles south of the confluence of the Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois Rivers. It's a major migration and wintering area for birds from the Mississippi and Central Flyways.

The refuge is part of the largest remaining block of bottomland hardwood forest in Missouri. The diversity and abundance of fish, amphibian, reptile, invertebrate, bird and mammal species is among the greatest of any ecosystem in North America.



DU's project will replace a major water-control and spillway structure that's undersized and failing. The 50-year-old equipment is causing frequent and prolonged flooding in the Mississippi floodplain. By installing new, larger equipment, the project will improve habitat across more than 3,000 acres.



The new structures will allow U.S. Fish and Wildlife managers to manage water flow closer to as it occurred historically.

"We've learned that going back in and restoring natural hydrology is the way it needs to be," said Mark Flaspohler, DU's manager of conservation services for Missouri. "The system functions better because you're not trying to go against mother nature's will."

Mingo National Wildlife Refuge provides numerous public use opportunities; including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education and interpretation. These public use aspects will be further enhanced when restoration is completed.

Ducks Unlimited partnered with private donors, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Missouri Department of Conservation and DU conservation easement holders to secure the NAWCA funds needed for this project. Project partners committed about \$3.7 million in matching funds to the \$1 million from NAWCA.

Work on the refuge is expected to begin in spring or summer and, depending on the weather, construction should be completed by fall.



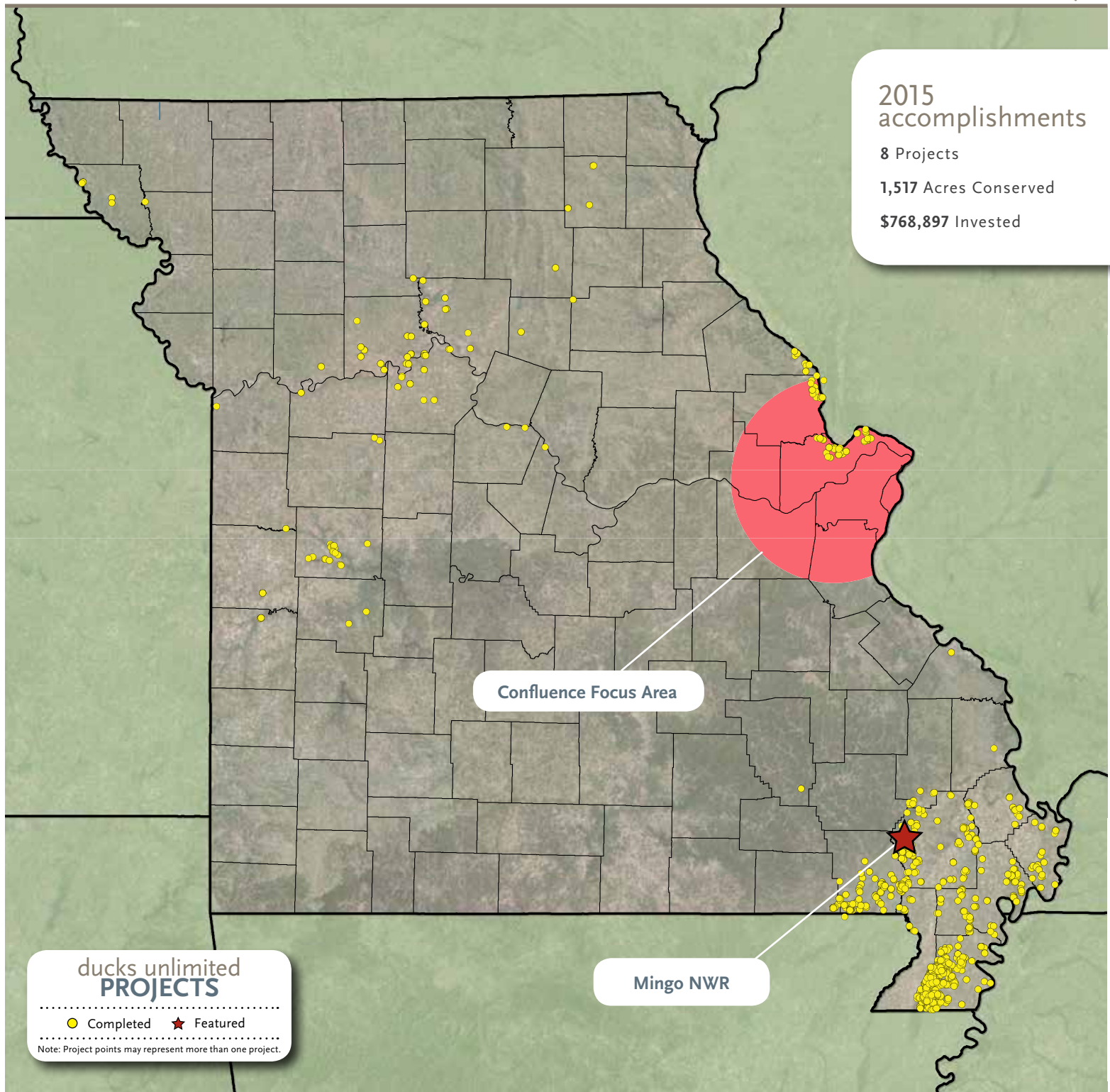


## 2015 accomplishments

8 Projects

1,517 Acres Conserved

\$768,897 Invested



## MEET YOUR MISSOURI CONSERVATION STAFF



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## MISSOURI AGRICULTURE WETLANDS INITIATIVE GROWS PRIVATE WETLANDS

*D*ucks Unlimited and several partners are finding success working with farmers to re-establish wetlands on private land.

In Missouri, 93 percent of the total landbase is in private ownership. In many locations, modern engineering has tamed swamps and marshes and converted the rich floodplains of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers into highly productive farmland.

Agriculture continues to play a vital role in Missouri's social and economic well-being. That's why the Missouri Agriculture Wetland Initiative was established in 2003. The program is a cooperative partnership between Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Missouri Department of Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, Missouri Audubon and Missouri landowners to integrate wetlands into agricultural operations.



DU and conservation partners will pay up to \$20,000 per site to landowners interested in enhancing their agriculture design to allow for the seasonal flooding of native wetlands and adjoining cropland.

To date, the initiative has completed 30 projects impacting 1,909 acres in Missouri. In 2015, partners worked with volunteer landowners to complete four new projects which impacted another 140 acres of wetlands. And for 2016, DU and conservation partners have 10 additional projects in various stages and once completed they will impact another 472 acres of quality wetland habitats.

"We can do really good conservation work on public land, but when 93 percent of our land is private, we're not going to achieve all of our conservation goals only working on the remaining 7 percent," said Mark Flaspohler, DU's manager of conservation services for Missouri.

### A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Missouri 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 Missouri 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 Missouri. 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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