



NEBRASKA

great plains region • state conservation report

2016



Ducks Unlimited conservation programs in Nebraska have been going strong all year. As of March, numerous wetland restoration and enhancement projects were completed totaling 3,334 acres. DU secured two NAWCA grants totaling \$2 million, four Nebraska Environmental Trust grants and three Conoco-Phillips/Playa Lakes Joint Venture grants for waterfowl habitat work in the state.

Several areas significant to waterfowl in Nebraska are overgrown with invasive trees. Water channels are silted in, damaging the natural hydrology and ecological function of wetlands. Ducks Unlimited works in these areas to remove the trees and excavate channels to create shallow wetland habitat. In

2015, DU conducted this work on Bassway Strip Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Buffalo County, Darr Farms LLC conservation easement in Dawson County, Kleager conservation easement in Scotts Bluff County, Crane Trust (tree removal only) in Hall County, Jaeger conservation easement in Dawson County, Timber Lake Ranch Camp in Merrick County, Dogwood WMA in Dawson County, Blue Hole WMA in Buffalo County, and the Craig revolving property in Lincoln County.

To control water levels and manage for moist soil vegetation, DU installed a pump on the Peterson Unit of Funk Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) in Phelps County. Ducks Unlimited completed another

35-acre moist soil impoundment on the Smith-Doering conservation easement in Scotts Bluff County.

At Victor Lakes WPA in Gosper County, DU excavated and filled areas to prevent the wetland basin from draining too quickly. Several years ago, the clay soil layer beneath the wetland was punctured when the ditch was created and the water drained into soil. Rainwater Basin wetlands usually have little to no connectivity with groundwater unless that layer is punctured. Repairing this drainage problem will allow water to fill the wetland and restore the habitat.

A large road berm and concentration pit were negatively impacting water movement within two large Rainwater Basin wetlands at Heron WPA in York County. DU filled the pit and removed the road berm to restore the hydrology. DU acquired three conservation easements in Scotts Bluff County totaling 893 acres, acquired a 160-acre property adjacent to Real WPA, and assisted Prairie Plains Resource Institute in acquiring the Sherman Ranch in Merrick County. Each of these properties contain numerous wetlands with many that need restoration.



VOLUNTEER AND LIFE SPONSOR MATT KREIFELS CONTRIBUTES TO PRAIRIES

From a young age Ducks Unlimited Area Chairman Matt Kreifels has loved the outdoors. He credits the loved ones in his life with encouraging this passion.

“My mother, father and my wife are all passionate about the outdoors in different ways,” Matt said.

Matt pursues outdoor activities with his family, especially waterfowling. He and his wife, Courtney, share the tradition with their children as they experience the magic of decoying waterfowl. They also want to ensure their children understand the role conservation plays in preserving the ecosystems that support migrating and breeding waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

As a volunteer for DU, Matt commits his time to organizing volunteers and restarting the Western Douglas County DU chapter and banquet. As a chapter chairman, he is focusing the chapter’s efforts on the Rescue Our Wetlands campaign to support conservation of critical waterfowl habitat.

“The role DU plays in engaging waterfowlers and non-waterfowlers is incredible. Courtney and I have been amazed with the commitment and generosity of the local DU leadership. We are looking forward to becoming more engaged in DU’s many conservation and networking events,” said Matt.

Matt and Courtney pledged a life sponsorship to Rescue Our Wetlands and directed their donation to the prairies.

“The Kreifels understand the significance of the Prairie Pothole Region to the ducks that come to Nebraska. They want to contribute to the breeding grounds to preserve the migrating flocks that visit the state each spring and fall,” said Terry Kostinec, DU Director of Development for Nebraska.



Matt Kreifels and his wife Courtney with their children Johnathan and Reagan



THE ROLE OF CATTLE IN WETLAND MANAGEMENT

Ducks Unlimited promotes livestock grazing as a management technique for wetlands in Nebraska. Grazing is a cost efficient management tool that maintains these areas as productive working lands and is supported by local farmers and ranchers. When cattle graze on vegetation, the resulting ecological processes promotes diverse, resilient and productive grassland, and wetland vegetation that provides nutrients for migratory birds.

The prairies and interspersed wetlands of the Great Plains evolved under an intense disturbance regime that included drought, flooding, fire, and grazing by large herds of bison and other herbivores. Since these herds are no longer roaming the plains, cattle replicate past vegetation disturbance and promote desired habitat conditions. With the right timing and grazing intensity, undesirable plant species that choke out wetlands such as reed canary grass, river bulrush and cattails are set back while seed-producing annual plants such as smartweed and barnyard grass are promoted.

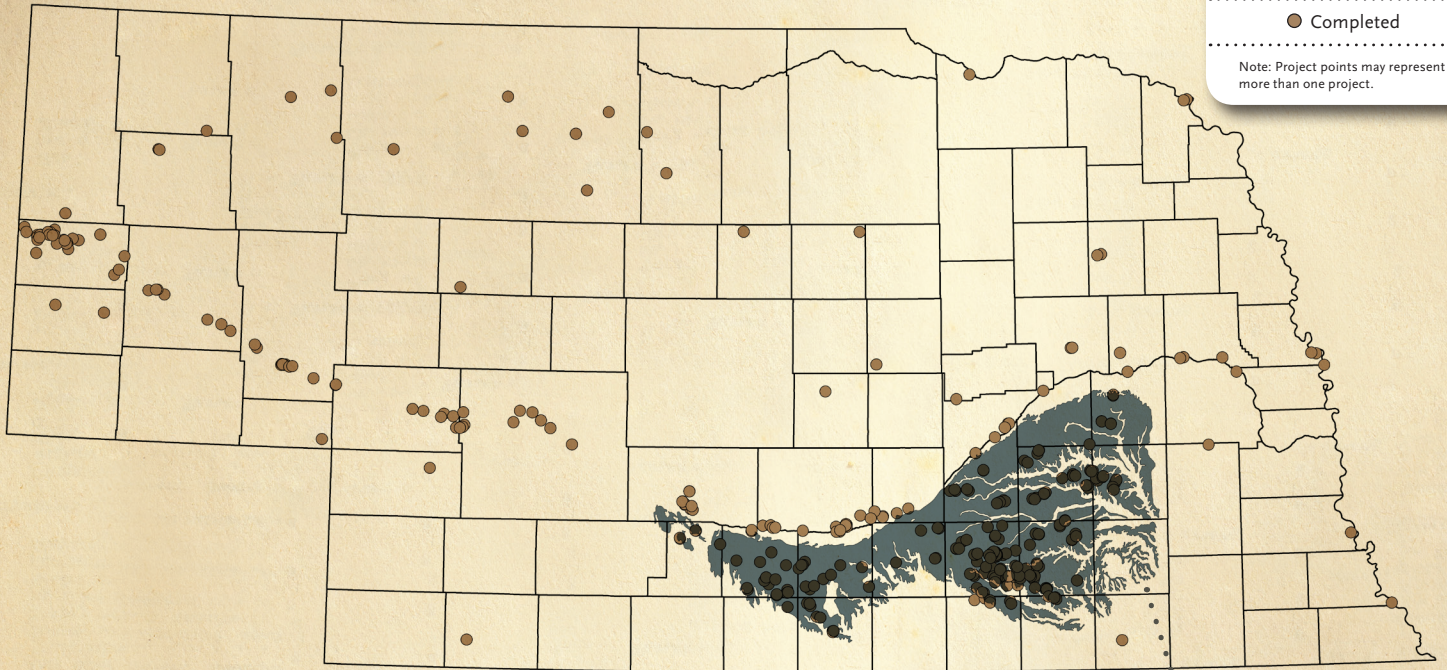
To promote grazing, DU installed fencing and livestock wells at the Hinze property in Butler County which is part of DU’s revolving habitat program, the Dietz-Kramer tract

NEBRASKA PROJECT MAP 1984 - PRESENT

ducks unlimited
PROJECTS

● Completed

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.



YTD accomplishments

296 Projects Completed

29,045 Acres Protected

44,044 Acres Restored/Enhanced

90,956 Impacted Acres

Rainwater Basin

(Based on numbers available March 2016)

▼
at DU's Verona Complex in Clay County, Bulrush Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Clay County, and Hidden Marsh WMA in York County. Additional properties where this work was done include a tract adjacent to Smith WPA in Clay County, Votipka conservation easement in Fillmore County, a tract adjacent to Troester WPA in Hamilton County and Darr Farms conservation easement in Dawson County.

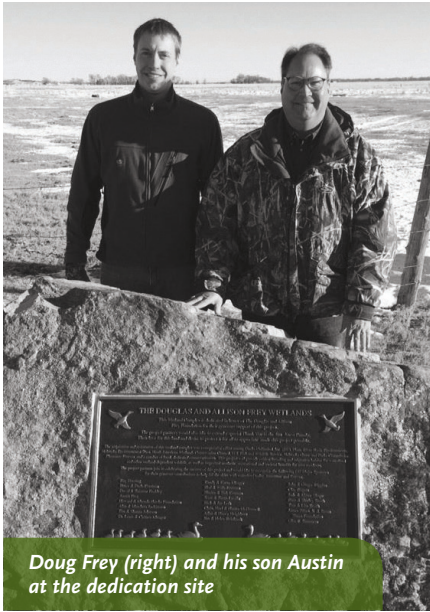


TERRY KOSTINEC DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Terry Kostinec is the newest director of development for Nebraska and South Dakota. Terry has solid experience with Ducks Unlimited's major gift and event fundraising working as the regional director in Central Minnesota for the past 17 years. Terry's background includes time spent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Terry is a native of Nebraska and travels to hunt waterfowl on the Missouri and Platte Rivers, the potholes of South Dakota and the western plains of Saskatchewan. He resides in Vermillion, South Dakota.

PLATTE RIVER PROPERTY DEDICATED TO NEBRASKA CONSERVATIONIST



Doug Frey (right) and his son Austin at the dedication site

As part of the Heartland Heritage and Habitat initiative, Ducks Unlimited purchased a 680-acre property along the North Platte River near Bridgeport from the Jim Anest family. Acquiring the property took several years of fundraising and was made possible by generous support from the Douglas and Allison Frey Foundation, major sponsors, and the cooperation of the Anest Family.

In celebration of their gifts to DU, the property was dedicated as the Douglas and Allison Frey Wetlands project. Doug Frey, who grew up in Grand Island and now lives in Texas, is a member of DU's Wetlands America Trust (WAT) board, DU's land trust and foundation arm. Frey has watched the public's understanding grow about the continental significance of the Platte River to migrating waterfowl. "When I was a child, a few locals would drive out and watch the cranes. Now people come from all over the world for the experience," he said.

DU will eventually transfer most of the property to the Platte River Basin Environments (PRBE) for long-term ownership and management. The property contains many shallow wetlands that provide ideal migration and breeding habitat for waterfowl. The property is open to a variety of public activities, including hunting, and will remain open under PRBE's ownership.

REAL WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA ACQUISITION

Ducks Unlimited's Wetlands America Trust acquired a 160-acre property adjoining Real Waterfowl Production Area (WPA), near Fairmont in the Rainwater Basin (RWB). This property will add acreage to the WPA and allow cohesive management by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) of the wetlands on the area.

Prior to acquisition, the FWS struggled to manage and restore the wetlands on the WPA. FWS could not pump water, fill pits, plug ditches or alter the hydrology of the neighboring property. With DU's acquisition of the property and partnership with FWS, they are able to restore the wetland and manage it to maximize waterfowl habitat.

The tract contains a large water reuse reservoir measuring more than one third of a mile that has drastically altered the hydrology on both tracts and devastated the natural functions of the basin. Ducks Unlimited will restore up to 80 acres of wetland by filling the reuse pit. DU will transfer the property to the FWS and possibly use the remaining cropland for a land swap to acquire additional high priority areas in the RWB.

For information on DU's conservation programs:

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



**GREAT PLAINS
REGION**

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