

CONSERVATION UPDATE

North Carolina provides critical habitat for waterfowl produced in the prairies, Great Lakes and eastern Canada. In addition, the state winters upwards of 80 percent of the continental tundra swan population. DU has invested more than \$26.7 million and conserved nearly 130,000 acres in North Carolina. Ducks Unlimited and partners have protected more than 19,000 acres through conservation easements or public acquisition and restored or enhanced more than 110,000 acres of wetland habitat on both public and private lands. DU focuses on habitat conservation to provide waterfowl the resources they need across the continent, but providing hunters with improved and increased opportunities to hunt is also vitally important. DU projects on public lands like the Butner-Falls of the Neuse, Futch, Goose Creek, Texas Plantation, Roanoke River Wetlands, North River, and White Oak game lands and Mattamuskeet, Pea Island, Great Dismal Swamp and Alligator River national wildlife refuges enhance public hunting opportunities. Ducks Unlimited's goal is to secure the future of waterfowl in North Carolina and throughout North America. By strategically focusing on local and breeding-ground conservation efforts, DU hopes to improve waterfowling opportunities and wetlands for waterfowl, other wildlife and the citizens of North Carolina.



MAJOR SPONSOR REPORT

North Carolina's Campaign Committee surpassed all goals in 2016, including 36 new Life Sponsors, 18 upgrades and 5 new Feather Society members. With a great focus on participation and over-achieving in all other categories, North Carolina finished in the second spot on the 2016 Top Ten list. Clearly the people of North Carolina understand that giving to Ducks Unlimited is the soundest investment they can make for the future of wetlands, waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

Several NCDU major sponsors have stepped up in support of the Sportsmen for Tomorrow youth education initiative. Eddie Smith issued a challenge pledge, promising to match up to \$38,425 for the program. That is equal to half of the three-year budget for Sportsmen for Tomorrow activities. Rising to the challenge, major sponsors Bobby Rippey, Bob Barnhill, Ed Clement, Paul Johnson, Jimmy Moore, Donnie Lassiter and Jay Taylor all pledged their support for the program focused on building and educating the next generation of Ducks Unlimited supporters and dedicated conservationists.

Thanks to the generous support of these major sponsors, NCDU's youth programs will continue to set the example for the rest of the country. Their gifts will provide funding for the NCDU Greenwing Trailer, which facilitates youth events across the state and features a laser shot game; the youth leadership camp, which prepares the next generation of NCDU volunteers to lead the way; and waterfowl seminars and complimentary youth memberships to engage new people in our programs.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - TOMMY HUGHES, COASTAL ECO-REGION SUPERVISOR, NCWRC

Tommy Hughes has been an incredible champion for waterfowl conservation throughout his professional career and a great partner and supporter of DU. Having spent the duration of his career with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Tommy will be retiring this May after 34 years of service committed to the conservation of wildlife and natural resources in the state. Tommy has been instrumental in DU's conservation efforts on public lands and has been a role model partner to not only DU but other conservation organizations with whom we partner. Within recent years, Tommy has been key in providing support for our partnership with NCWRC, which has yielded improvements to Texas Plantation, Futch, Gull Rock, Lantern Acres, White Oak River and Butner-Falls of Neuse game lands within the past few years. Tommy was instrumental in the Catfish Lakes wetland enhancement project and the development of DU's engineering agreement with NCWRC, which continues to produce benefits for North Carolina's citizens and public land visitors.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT - TEXAS PLANTATION GAME LANDS

DU, in partnership with North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC), was recently awarded \$1,000,000 in funding from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program to restore 251 acres of wetland habitat on Texas Plantation Game Land in Tyrrell County, NC. The Texas Plantation Tract is perpetually protected by a Wetlands America Trust conservation easement and was acquired by NCWRC for creation of the Texas Plantation Game Land in 2015. This grant is the final funding component of the project as it leverages and compliments funding from NCWRC, DU and the North Carolina Attorney General's Environmental Enhancement Grant Program. Now that all project funding has been secured, DU will implement the project in a phased approach over the next two years, resulting in six managed wetland units providing optimal habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and other wetland-dependent wildlife. With more than 50 percent of North Carolina's natural wetlands lost, properly managed wetlands are critical to wildlife. The goal of this project is to restore critical wetland habitat functions and values on Texas Plantation for waterfowl, shorebirds, neo-tropical migrants and improve water quality for the estuarine system. Simultaneous benefits will be enhanced public waterfowl hunting opportunities, particularly for youth.



VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISING REPORT

Volunteer fundraisers are the heartbeat of Ducks Unlimited, and North Carolina has some of the best. North Carolina boasts more than 29,500 members, including 1,954 tremendous volunteers who hosted 171 events in 2016, raising more than \$2.45 million to support DU's conservation mission. This is the second year in a row that NCDU has raised more than \$2 million net has been raised!

Fred Causby began his volunteer efforts as a committee member of the Lake James DU Chapter in Morganton around 1995. After one year as a committee member, he became an area chairman. Fred served the next nine years in this capacity and was then asked to become a district chairman. Nearly ten years later, he was asked to step into the role he currently holds of state vice chairman for western North Carolina.



The Causby family enjoys volunteering for DU.

"I was recognized six times as district chairman of the year for Western region, but no one does it alone," Fred said. "I am blessed to have a wonderful, beautiful wife, Amy, who helps on the local committee and makes it easier for me to help other committees. We have four beautiful daughters, Courtney, Catherine, Carrigan, and Camelia, who all help with the local committee and travel with me to other events and help there as well. Last year they ran the store at the state convention. DU is a family affair for us."

State Chairman Gary Payne isn't sure whether it's Fred's leadership or his wife's and daughters' desserts that brings the crowd to the local event. "Fred's wife and four daughters always make the homemade desserts for our Lake James event. I pick at them ever year that we should do a raffle on just Amy's dessert tables. We could raise big bucks for the ducks on desserts alone!" he said.

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



**SOUTHERN
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