



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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### INTERIOR SECRETARY WATT LAUNCHES WETLANDS PROTECTION EFFORT; SEEKS PRIVATE INITIATIVES

Secretary of the Interior James Watt today launched a private sector task force to seek transfer of wetlands or development rights on wetlands to private, State, or federal entities that will assure that America's wetlands are dedicated to migratory bird habitat.

Secretary Watt has asked organization and corporate officials interested in migratory birds and wetland protection to join him on the special task force he calls "Protect Our Wetlands and Duck Resources (POWDR)." He said Governor Forrest (Fob) James, who will be stepping down from the Alabama State office in January, has agreed to serve as co-chairman of POWDR. A list of officials and corporate leaders who have joined the Secretary's task force is attached. Other members will be added.

The goals of the task force will be to advise and counsel public and private officials on wetlands protection and to lead an effort to encourage owners of wetlands, duck hunting clubs, and others to make gifts of their lands or the development rights on those lands. These gifts can be made to private groups such as Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy or to State agencies or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "I am confident that, with the proper encouragement, substantial acreage can be dedicated to permanent bird habitat," Watt said.

Watt said that the federal wetlands habitat protection program, begun in 1929, has not been as successful as would have been desirable. "A new initiative for saving the wetlands from drainage is essential if we are to provide sufficient habitat for our migratory birds," Watt said.

Conversion of privately-owned wetlands to other uses has surpassed the estimates of 20 years ago, the Secretary explained. In addition, rapidly escalating land prices have slowed federal and State acquisition of key areas. About 1.6 million acres of the federal wetlands goal remain to be protected. "Fee purchase or easements on these wetlands would cost an estimated \$140 million annually for 10 years," Watt said, "a cost that far exceeds the government's ability to pay in today's economic conditions. That is why a concerted private sector initiative is necessary. With the help of those organization and corporate leaders I've asked to join in this special task force, we can structure a proper solution to protect our threatened wetlands."

To emphasize the private initiative thrust of this wetlands protection effort, Watt told the task force members that there would be no remuneration for their services or expenses. "This will not be a government-sponsored program," he said. "It will be an effort by those of us concerned enough to dedicate our time and effort to preserving wetlands and migratory bird habitat."

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Attachment

PROTECT OUR WETLANDS AND DUCK RESOURCES (POWDR)

Task Force Members

**Chairman**

Honorable James G. Watt  
Secretary of the Interior

**Co-Chairman**

Honorable Forrest (Fob) James  
Governor of Alabama

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Honorable John Chafee  
United States Senate

Daniel Poole, President  
The Wildlife Management Institute

Honorable John Breau  
U. S. House of Representatives

Jack Berryman  
Executive Vice President  
International Association of Fish  
and Wildlife Agencies

Honorable Robert Lagomarsino  
U. S. House of Representatives

Ray Scott, Jr., President  
Bass Anglers Sportsmen's Society

Honorable Allen Olson  
Governor of North Dakota

Harlon Carter  
Executive Vice President  
National Rifle Association

John Henske, Chairman  
Olin Corporation

Carl Sullivan, Executive Director  
American Fisheries Society

Robert Marcotte, President  
Ducks Unlimited

William Blair, Jr., President  
The Nature Conservancy

Lee Dallager, Trustee  
J. N. (Ding) Darling Foundation

Robert Floweree, Chairman  
The Georgia Pacific Company

Eugene Bay, Jr., Publisher  
Field & Stream Magazine

Edward Jefferson, Chairman  
E. I. duPont deNemours Company

Clare Conley, Editor  
Outdoor Life Magazine

Alexander Calder, Chairman  
Union Camp Corporation

Norman Livermore  
Former California Secretary  
for Resources

Edward McMahon, President  
St. Regis Paper Company

Colonel Tom Bass  
Colt Industries

John Bookout, President  
Shell Oil Company

(As of June 9, 1982)