



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For release: August 30, 1991

Michael L. Smith 202-208-5650

### PRESIDENT BUSH BOOSTS FEDERAL DUCK STAMP PROGRAM

President George Bush will appear in a series of broadcast public service announcements to boost public awareness of the Federal Duck Stamp, Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan announced today.

"We are delighted with the President's support of the Federal Duck Stamp Program," Lujan said. "The Duck Stamp is one of our best and most reliable conservation tools for saving habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds, but more people need to know about this program."

The Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp was created in 1934 as a means of raising funds to acquire habitat for waterfowl nesting, feeding, and wintering sites. Over the past 57 years, the Duck Stamp, as it is commonly known, has generated almost \$400 million to acquire nearly 4 million acres protected within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The stamp is required of all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older as part of their valid license to hunt ducks, geese, or swans. Stamps are also popular with stamp collectors and non-hunters.

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Since duck populations declined during the 1980's because of drought in their northern nesting areas, there has been a downward turn in waterfowl hunting and stamp sales. As a result, Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has had less stamp revenue available to purchase and protect habitat.

"I'm afraid we're seeing a bit of a vicious cycle," said Mike Hayden, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. "Because of the downturn in duck numbers, some waterfowl hunters have shifted to other types of hunting. But loss of stamp sales reduces funding to acquire and safeguard quality habitat for the birds--this during a period of extended drought when they've needed it most."

The television and radio spots in which the President appears urge audiences to write for additional information about the Federal Duck Stamp Program. Respondents will receive a brochure entitled "The Duck Stamp Story," which includes an order form to buy 1989, 1990, and 1991 Duck Stamps, and a letter from Secretary Lujan.

"I want people to know that when they buy a Duck Stamp, virtually all the money they have paid actually buys land," Lujan said. "Ninety-eight percent, in fact, goes to habitat. The two-percent overhead is equally distributed between the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which prints the 4 million stamps for us each year, and the Postal Service, which serves as the main point of distribution and sales. I think that makes the Duck Stamp one of the most effective conservation investments anyone can make."

Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner emphasized that, while migratory waterfowl have been the primary beneficiaries of the program over the years, hundreds of other species of birds, animals, and plants have benefitted as well. "The contributions have been incredible," Turner said. "It's been one of the truly great but seldom heralded success stories in American conservation. I especially hope the President's TV appearance will inspire young people to learn more about this program. We get many letters from school children and their teachers asking what they can do to help conservation. By buying a Duck Stamp, they would not only have a very beautiful and collectible stamp, but they would also have the satisfaction of knowing they helped save some wildlife and its habitat."

The 1991-92 Federal Duck Stamp, a depiction of king eiders by Vermont artist Nancy Howe, is currently available for \$15 at most major post offices and national wildlife refuges, or by direct order from the Duck Stamp Office, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW., Room 2058, Washington, DC 20240.