



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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COMMISSION APPROVES ADDITIONS AT SIX NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES AND FIVE WETLANDS PROJECTS IN CANADA AND THE U.S.

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today announced the approval of nearly \$6 million in waterfowl and wetlands projects that will add almost 3,500 acres to the National Wildlife Refuge System, bring another 1,250 wetland-acres under long-term protection in Canada, and improve 23,000 acres of wetlands in North America. The conservation projects were approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, which Lujan chairs.

The projects approved on June 23 include 120 acres at Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Minnesota, which was established to preserve and restore prairie pothole habitat for nesting waterfowl. When complete, the refuge will protect 13,754 acres through a combination of leases, farming agreements, easements, and acquisition.

In New Jersey, the Commission approved the acquisition of 17 acres for the Cape May NWR, which provides high-quality wintering habitat for migrating waterfowl and a critical feeding stop for migrating shorebirds. Acquisition of an

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additional 57 acres was approved at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR, a major wintering and stopover point for waterfowl, particularly the black duck and Atlantic brant.

Other acquisitions approved were 1,911 acres at Lower Hatchie NWR in Tennessee, another important migrating and wintering habitat for waterfowl; 1,338 acres at Back Bay NWR in Virginia, established in 1938 to provide wintering and migrating habitat for a variety of waterfowl; and 42.8 acres at Montezuma NWR in New York, which was also established in 1938 for the protection of migratory waterfowl and other waterbirds.

The Commission also approved an 11,900-acre expansion of the Montezuma refuge as part of the Northern Montezuma Wetland Project, a joint venture under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The \$4.15 million for these projects comes from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, which consists primarily of money received from the sale of the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp ("Federal Duck Stamp") that must be purchased by all waterfowl hunters 16 years and older. By law, this money must be used to acquire waterfowl habitat.

In other actions, the Commission approved \$1.3 million for two projects in Canada and three in the United States under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. This legislation provides matching Federal funding for wetlands conservation projects in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Funds come from

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interest on Federal excise taxes on hunting equipment sales, fines and penalties from violators of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and private donations.

The Commission approved \$445,000 for an innovative project in South Dakota that will create 500 new wetlands on private land in 35 counties. These new wetlands, averaging 5 acres each for a total of 2,500 acres, will enhance another 15,500 acres resulting in improved water quality, erosion control, protection of fragile riparian areas, and benefits to all species of prairie-nesting birds and several species of shorebirds. Multiple partners, who have contributed \$569,300 in non-Federal funds, include two Native American organizations, 35 conservation districts, Ducks Unlimited, the State, and three Federal agencies.

The Eagle Bluffs Wetland Restoration Project in Boone County, Missouri, received \$640,000 to restore wetlands along the Missouri River where 94 percent of the wetlands have been lost. The area is important for wetland wildlife, rare and endangered plants and animals, floodway, water quality, and public use. Partners include the Missouri Department of Conservation, Ducks Unlimited, the City of Columbia, and the University of Missouri.

Also approved was \$232,500 to enhance and restore 1,450 acres in the Llano Seco Unit of the Sacramento River NWR. It is part of the most important wintering area for waterfowl in California and also is used by more than 270 species of birds, including sandhill cranes and 60 species of waterbirds. The Llano Seco Unit is a priority project of the Central Valley Joint Venture of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

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The Commission also approved \$108,125 to restore, enhance, and manage 1,250 acres of wetlands in Ontario and New Brunswick, Canada, that would be acquired through purchase and easements. The project is expected to at least double waterfowl production and to benefit a variety of other species. Partners matched the Federal funding and then Canada matched it again with \$129,750.

"I applaud the innovative partnership approaches being used to protect and improve wetlands and wildlife habitat on a continent-wide basis," said Mike Hayden, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. "These collective, cooperative efforts are the kind of stewardship that's needed to conserve wetlands."

The projects were recommended to the Commission by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, a public and private body established by legislation in support of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The Plan is a 15-year, international program to conserve wetlands and enhance waterfowl populations in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission include Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan, Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William Reilly, U.S. Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and David Pryor of Arkansas, and Representatives John Dingell of Michigan and Richard Schulze of Pennsylvania.