



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION COMMISSION APPROVES REFUGE
ADDITIONS AND WETLANDS PROJECTS IN THE U.S. AND CANADA**

One of the Nation's largest freshwater marshes is among the areas that will be protected and restored as a result of recent funding approval by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan announced today.

The Cabinet-level Commission, which Lujan chairs, approved additions to seven national wildlife refuges and 32 grants for wetlands acquisition and improvement projects. These projects included Minnesota's Swan Lake, one of the country's largest freshwater marshes. Grants of \$13.9 million from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund will be matched by \$26 million from state, private, and other non-federal sources to improve or protect wetlands in the United States and Canada.

"These are outstanding examples of partnerships at work", Lujan said. "Pooling our resources and pulling together are vitally important if we are to succeed in conserving the continent's valuable wetlands."

Lujan commended waterfowl hunters, stamp collectors, and other conservationists who help in the effort by buying Duck Stamps. Proceeds from the sale of Duck Stamps, the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp that must be purchased by all

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waterfowl hunters 16 years and older, will be used to acquire the following waterfowl habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System:

Arkansas--Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), 124 acres; Louisiana--Upper Ouachita NWR, 1,044 acres; Maryland--Blackwater NWR, 800 acres; Mississippi--Tallahatchie NWR, 509 acres; New Jersey--Cape May NWR, 40 acres; Tennessee--Lower Hatchie NWR, 1,260 acres; and Virginia--Back Bay NWR, 26 acres. In California, the Commission approved establishment of the North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area (WMA), along with acquisition of perpetual easements on 288 acres there, and on another 200 acres at Butte Sink WMA.

All of the refuge additions and easements support the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, a continent-wide effort among public and private organizations in Canada, Mexico, and the United States to conserve wetlands and wildlife populations.

"We're beginning to see positive results from the North American Waterfowl Plan," said Assistant Interior Secretary Mike Hayden. "In many drought-stricken areas, the only places you'll see waterfowl or other shore and wading birds is in these wetland improvement projects. The Plan is the best thing we've got going for sustaining and rebuilding these populations."

Grants and matching funds from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund will be used to enhance, restore, or acquire wetland habitat for a diversity of wildlife, including most of the world's population of sandpipers, other shorebirds and wading birds, waterfowl, endangered species, and plant communities. In the U.S., 18 grants totalling \$13,892,780 were approved and 14 grants of \$5,106,524 were approved for Canada.

The projects were recommended to the Commission by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, a public and private body established by law. Funding comes from appropriations and a special account from wildlife-related interest and fines.

Members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in addition to Lujan, include 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.

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Editor's Note: A complete State-by-State listing of wetland conservation projects approved during the Commission meeting follows.

North American Wetland Conservation Fund projects approved
in the United States:

California--perpetual easements on privately owned wetlands in 13
counties, \$1,280,000; and restoration of the Freitas Unit of
the Kesterson NWR, \$245,800;

Delaware--Williams-Asche Wetlands, \$800,000 and Nanticoke River
Wetlands, \$285,000;

Florida--Thomas M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area, \$138,000);

Louisiana--Bayou Penchant Basin, \$560,250 (to become the Mandalay
NWR);

Michigan--Crow Island Wetland Initiative, \$175,000;

Minnesota--Heron Lake, \$1,420,000 and Swan Lake, \$553,425;

Missouri--Coon Island WMA, \$637,500;

Montana--Northeast Prairie Pothole Project, \$100,000;

Nebraska--Schindler Waterfowl Production Area, \$60,000;

North Dakota--Chase Lake Centennial Area, \$198,931;

Ohio--Metzger's Marsh Wetland Restoration, \$700,000;

Oklahoma--Deep Fork River, \$250,000;

South Carolina--ACE Basin NWR, \$326,400;

Tennessee--Mustin Bottoms, \$882,100 and White Lake, \$173,125.

Projects approved in Canada:

Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New
Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland),
\$871,488.

Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (provinces of Alberta,
Saskatchewan, and Manitoba), \$3,975,540.

Pacific Coast Joint Venture (Province of British Columbia),
\$259,500.