



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**COMMISSION APPROVES ADDITIONS TO FIVE REFUGES AND \$11.3 MILLION
FOR NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION FUND GRANTS**

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt today announced approval by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission of additions to five national wildlife refuges, the removal of one from the System, and \$11.3 million in grants from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Secretary Babbitt chairs the Cabinet-level Commission, which approved Refuge purchase of 204 acres at Overflow National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Arkansas; 950 acres in easements at Butte Sink Wildlife Management Area in California; 11,440 acres at McFaddin NWR, Texas; 329 acres at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah; and 102 acres at Missisquoi NWR, Vermont.

The Commission also granted approval to vacate four \$1 easements purchased in the 1930s at Lake Elsie NWR in North Dakota and to remove the refuge from the system. The easements were limited to water management and hunting and did not include development rights on the 635 acres which remained in private ownership. The Service has lacked authority under the easements to regulate or control the resulting lakeside development and

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recreation, which together with sand and gravel extraction, have substantially eliminated wildlife habitat.

The \$11.3 million in grants approved by the Commission from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund were complemented by \$18 million from grantees and other partners. Grants of \$3,514,520 were awarded in Canada for 11 wetlands conservation projects to protect or improve 47,865 acres, while a \$41,570 grant in Mexico will be used to develop management plans for two coastal wetlands in the State of Sonora.

In the United States, 14 projects received grants totalling \$7.8 million to protect and restore some of the nation's most important wetland ecosystems providing habitat for a wide diversity of species. All 14 projects will benefit State or Federally listed threatened or endangered species, ranging from the gray wolf and bald eagle in Michigan to the piping plover in Massachusetts.

"These projects are a prime example of complex ecosystem management on a continental scale and amply demonstrate the multiple benefits derived from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund," said Secretary Babbitt. "I'm especially impressed by the diverse partnerships forged to bring this about."

Near Dayton, Ohio, for example, an unusual coalition came together to protect and restore more than 1,000 acres of the Beaver Creek wetlands that will protect a major aquifer and also contain a rare fen-like ecosystem. The partners include Wright State University, Southwestern Portland Cement Company, Carroll High School, Wal-Mart, Knollwood Garden Center, and a number of local and national conservation organizations, including the World Wildlife Fund.

Funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund comes from appropriations and accumulated interest generated by the Pittman-Robertson Trust Fund, and fines and forfeitures collected from Migratory Bird Treaty Act violations. Projects are recommended to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission by a nine-member, public and private Council established by legislation and appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.

Members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in addition to Babbitt include Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner, U.S. Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and David Pryor of Arkansas, and Representatives John Dingell of Michigan and Curt Weldon of Pennsylvania.

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Editor's Note: See attached listing of grants.

North American Wetlands Conservation Fund Grants
Approved September 14, 1993

Arkansas. \$800,000 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the addition of 3,125 acres to the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge.

Florida. \$1.5 million to the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program to acquire 2,015 acres of the Indian River Lagoon.

Idaho. \$125,000 to The Nature Conservancy to acquire, restore, and enhance 440 acres at Thousand Springs/Chilly Slough.

Illinois. \$741,000 to the Illinois Department of Conservation to acquire and restore 3,125 acres of the cooperatively managed Cache River wetlands.

Kansas. \$267,500 to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to acquire, restore, and enhance 1,100 acres at McPherson Valley, and \$1,200,000 to restore 13,300 acres at Cheyenne Bottoms.

Massachusetts. \$385,000 to the Massachusetts Audubon Society to acquire 122 acres at Allens Pond to protect the threatened piping plover.

Michigan. \$50,000 to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to acquire 1,673 acres known as the Peterson Acquisition in the Upper Peninsula.

Missouri. \$1,133,550 to the Missouri Department of Conservation to restore and enhance 2,500 acres at Otter Slough.

New York. \$410,000 to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to acquire 1,302 acres of the Northern Montezuma Wetlands.

Ohio. \$114,110 to Wright State University to acquire, enhance, and restore 480 wetland acres at Beaver Creek.

Oklahoma. \$250,000 to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to acquire and restore 1,200 acres at Deep Fork River.

Vermont/New York. \$633,700 to The Nature Conservancy to acquire 3,448 acres of Lake Champlain wetlands in New York and Vermont.

Virginia. \$200,000 to The Nature Conservancy to acquire 800 acres at Lilly Point Marsh.