

# News Release



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## Innovative Basin Waterfowl Habitat Project Product of Landowner, Agencies, Non-Profit Partnership

(April 26, 2006-Coeur d'Alene, ID) Migrating waterfowl winging their way across Idaho's Panhandle will have a safe new place to rest and feed, thanks to a newly forged Conservation Easement agreement in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. The Agreement was developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Ducks Unlimited, Inc. and a willing private property owner.

According to EPA and other officials, this Agreement — covering approximately 400 acres in the Coeur d'Alene River valley near Medimont, Idaho — uses an innovative approach and is an integral part of the comprehensive mine waste cleanup underway in the Basin. In an unusual partnership, federal, state, tribal, a non-profit wetland conservation organization and private parties have come together to launch a cost-effective project to reduce waterfowl mortality in the Lower Coeur d'Alene Basin.

"Public and private interests have come together in Idaho on behalf of waterfowl and other wildlife," said EPA Regional Administrator Michael Bogert. "This innovative, collaborative effort directly benefits the resource, the community and our project partners. I can't think of a better way to kick-off another season of progress in the Basin cleanup."

More than a century of mining and ore-processing activities upstream in the historic Silver Valley have contaminated the Coeur d'Alene River and its floodplain and adjacent lateral lakes and wetlands with sediment containing high concentrations of cadmium, lead, zinc and other metals. As a result waterfowl frequently ingest lead-contaminated sediment and suffer serious toxic effects or die. The problem has become so pervasive, an annual "die-off" of waterfowl has occurred in the area for decades. This project is an important first step in addressing contaminated wildlife feeding areas within the Coeur d'Alene Basin.

The Agreement was established within the framework of the EPA's 2002 Bunker Hill Record of Decision, which charts the course of mine waste cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene Basin over the next 30 years. EPA, FWS and the U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers will conduct a Superfund cleanup action on the easement area over the coming months, converting the existing agricultural land to clean wetland waterfowl feeding habitat. The FWS is proposing to conduct a wetland restoration project at this site in the coming years. By returning the area to a more natural state, the partnership predicts it will become an attractive feeding alternative and provide safer habitat for both resident and migratory waterfowl. The property will continue to be owned by the private property owner and will not be open to the public.

The EPA, U.S. Department of the Interior, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe have agreed to coordinate on the cleanup, restoration and long-term operation and maintenance of the conservation easement area. The Army Corps of Engineers and Avista Utilities have also supported the project.

"This is another fine example of what can happen when Idahoans and EPA work together," EPA's Bogert declared.