



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# 2003 Annual Report

## *Division of Realty Mountain-Prairie Region*

Contact: Harvey Wittmier  
Chief, Division of Realty

Phone: 303 / 236 8130  
Fax: 303 / 236 4712  
E-mail: Harvey\_Wittmier@fws.gov

### Habitat Highlights

- Over 87,000 acres of wildlife habitat was added to the National Wildlife Refuge System within the Mountain-Prairie Region (Region 6) in 2003. Most of the acreage is located in North and South Dakota. Additional land located in Montana, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming was also brought into the Refuge System this year.
- 18,219 acres of the 87,000 acres added to the Refuge System (noted above) are attributable to partnerships, donations, transfers, and acquisitions funded with grant monies. The dollar value of these lands is approximately \$1,626,700.
- Inholdings in two Wyoming refuges, Mortenson Lake and Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuges, were acquired in fee, adding 735 acres to the Refuge System.
- During the summer of 2003, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) visited western Montana. This region of the State is proposed for a new conservation easement initiative known as the Rocky Mountain Front. This initiative would set the goal of acquiring easements on approximately 170,000 acres.



USFWS

*Avocets at Bear River MBR*

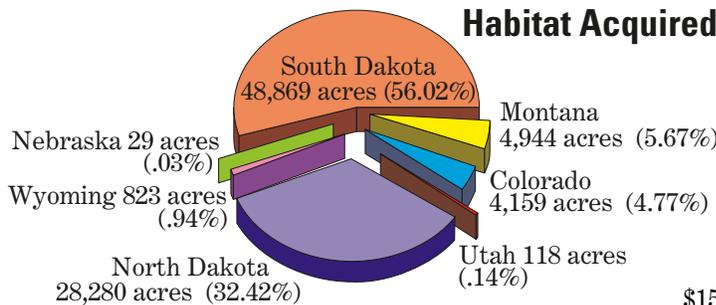
- Conservation easement purchases in Montana resulted in the protection of an additional 2,300 acres in the Blackfoot Valley of western Montana.



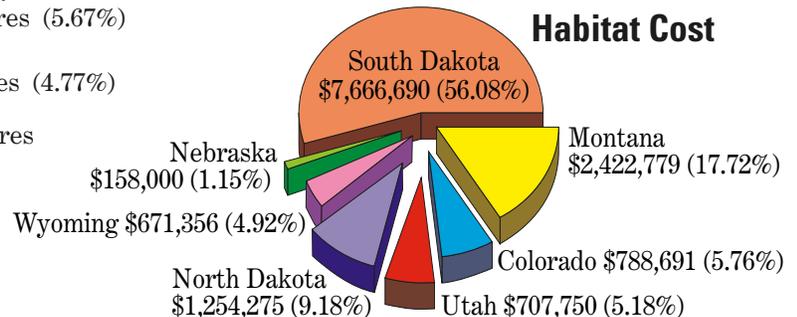
USFWS

*Blackfoot Valley, Montana*

### Habitat Acquired



### Habitat Cost



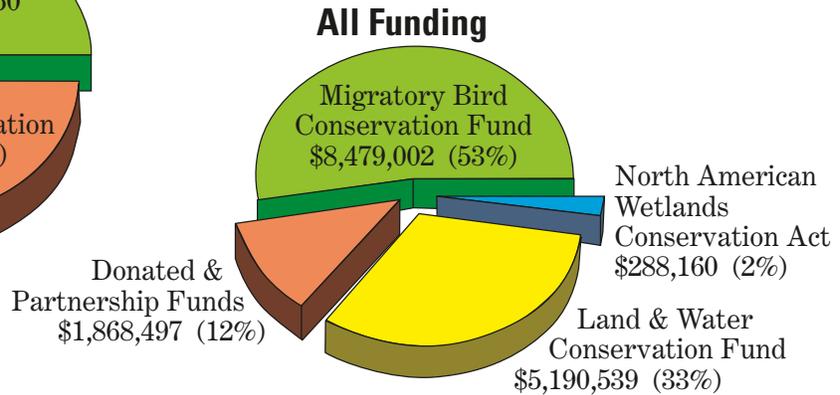
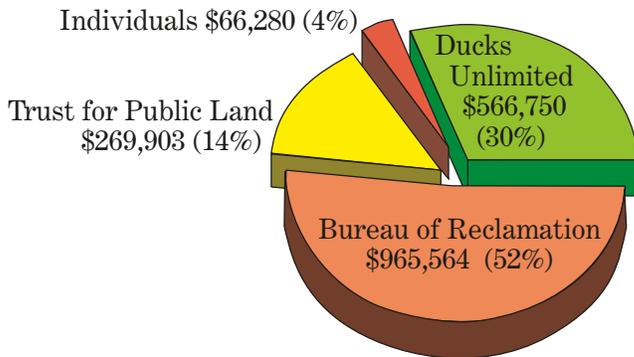
### 2003 Funding Summary

Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) accounted for almost 33% of Region 6's total acquisition funds (\$5,190,539). The remaining funding consisted of: 53% Migratory Bird Conservation Funds (\$8,479,002), 12% donated and partnership funds (\$1,868,497), and 2% North American Wetlands Conservation Act (\$288,160).

The majority of the acreage protected in 2003 (primarily by acquisition of wetland and grassland easements) is located in South Dakota, followed by North Dakota. In addition, Ducks Unlimited donated grassland easements which will protect over 10,000 acres — while close to 3,000 acres were acquired with North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants and Ducks Unlimited matching grants.

In 2003, Region 6 easement acquisitions accounted for 91% of the easement acres added to the NWRS nationwide. Of the total easement acres acquired by the FWS across the country (88,569 acres), Region 6 acquired 80,691. The majority of habitat protection in Region 6 is accomplished by purchase of grassland and wetland easements, which constitute for Region 6's significant contribution to the conservation efforts of the Service.

### Financial Contributions from Partners



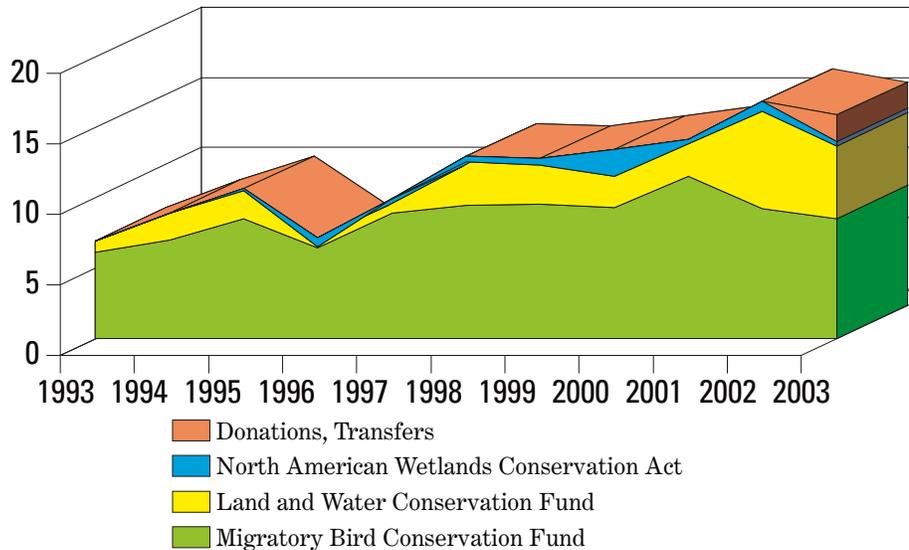
#### New LWCF Money for 2004

The FY2004 budget was approved prior to the publication of this document. Region 6 will receive new LWCF funding in the following amounts:

- \$7,000,000 for Baca National Wildlife Refuge, Colorado
- \$500,000 for Boyer Chute NWR, Nebraska
- \$1,000,000 for Dakota Tallgrass Prairie, South Dakota
- \$2,000,000 for Western Montana - Blackfoot Valley

### Region 6 Land Acquisition 1993 — 2003 in Dollars Spent

(In millions of dollars)





Mathew Perry / USFWS

*Redhead and young*

### Conservation Success Story

After several years of negotiation, the Realty Division successfully completed an important fee acquisition and land exchange for Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (MBR) located in Utah.

The goal of this complex transaction was to add habitat and limit development adjacent to the Refuge. This undertaking involved the Service, The Nature Conservancy (TNC, a non-profit organization), a willing seller, a corporation, and the Corp of Engineers.

This multi-phased land deal happened because the Service was able to structure a transaction which benefitted all the parties involved. Commercial development set to occur adjacent to the Refuge was

redirected to an area with the least affect on migratory birds and wildlife. In addition, the corporation donated a portion of its land to the Refuge and sold the remaining parcel as a bargain sale. At the same time, TNC acquired a critical section of land (later transferred to the Service) and acted as a financial bridge, thereby assisting the government in meeting the timing of this transaction. The final outcome of this land acquisition, exchange, and donation was expansion of Bear River MBR and will enable the Service to reverse past loss of habitat and protect high-risk habitat. This transaction provides a positive example of accomplishing land preservation in partnership with non-profits, private parties, and the Federal government.



Gary Zahm / USFWS

*Sandhill cranes, Lake Andes NWR, South Dakota*

### New and Expanded Refuges

- Baca National Wildlife Refuge was established after the Bureau of Reclamation transferred 3,300 acres to the Service. The Service will acquire 53,500 additional acres in 2004 and 2005 to be added to this new Refuge in Colorado.
- Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge boundary was enlarged when 857 acres were added to the Refuge.



Mike Blendon / USFWS

*Baca NWR, Colorado*



USFWS

*Blackfoot River, Montana*

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Region 6, NWRS, Division of Realty  
P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal Center  
Denver, Colorado 80225  
303 / 236 8130  
303 / 236 4712 fax  
email: Harvey\_Wittmier@fws.gov**

**For State transfer relay service  
TTY / Voice 711**

**March 2004**

**Pending Projects**

- The acquisition of 97,000 acres (53,500 acres will be managed as part of Baca NWR) is anticipated to occur in 2004 and 2005. Realty staff is working with The Nature Conservancy and the National Park Service to accomplish this large scale protection effort. Realty staff is also working with the Bureau of Land Management and the State of Colorado to achieve a land exchange which will result in an additional 25,000 acres (approximately) being added to Baca NWR.
- The Service is poised to acquire inholdings in both Bear River MBR and Marais des Cygnes NWR (Kansas) through partnerships with The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy. These non-profit organizations have bridged both transactions because of time sensitive opportunities.
- Proposed boundary modification of War Horse NWR (Montana) by approximately 198 acres, a land exchange of about 400 acres, and reservation of a conservation easement to protect an additional 760 acres. This is a very complex exchange being reviewed by the Service Director.

- The Department of Defense will transfer about 6,000 acres to the Service this spring to formally establish the Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (Colorado). The creation of this Refuge has involved complex issues relating to environmental contamination cleanup, timing on the transfer of jurisdiction, and planning because of a myriad of issues having to do with the prior use of this property for weapons production and consequential hazardous by-products.

- Currently, there are two projects underway at Arapaho NWR (Colorado). One involves a land exchange, while the other may lead to the eventual acquisition of approximately 3,000 acres within the Refuge.



*This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

Sheri Fetherman / USFWS



*Highway 14 overlook, Arapaho NWR, Colorado*