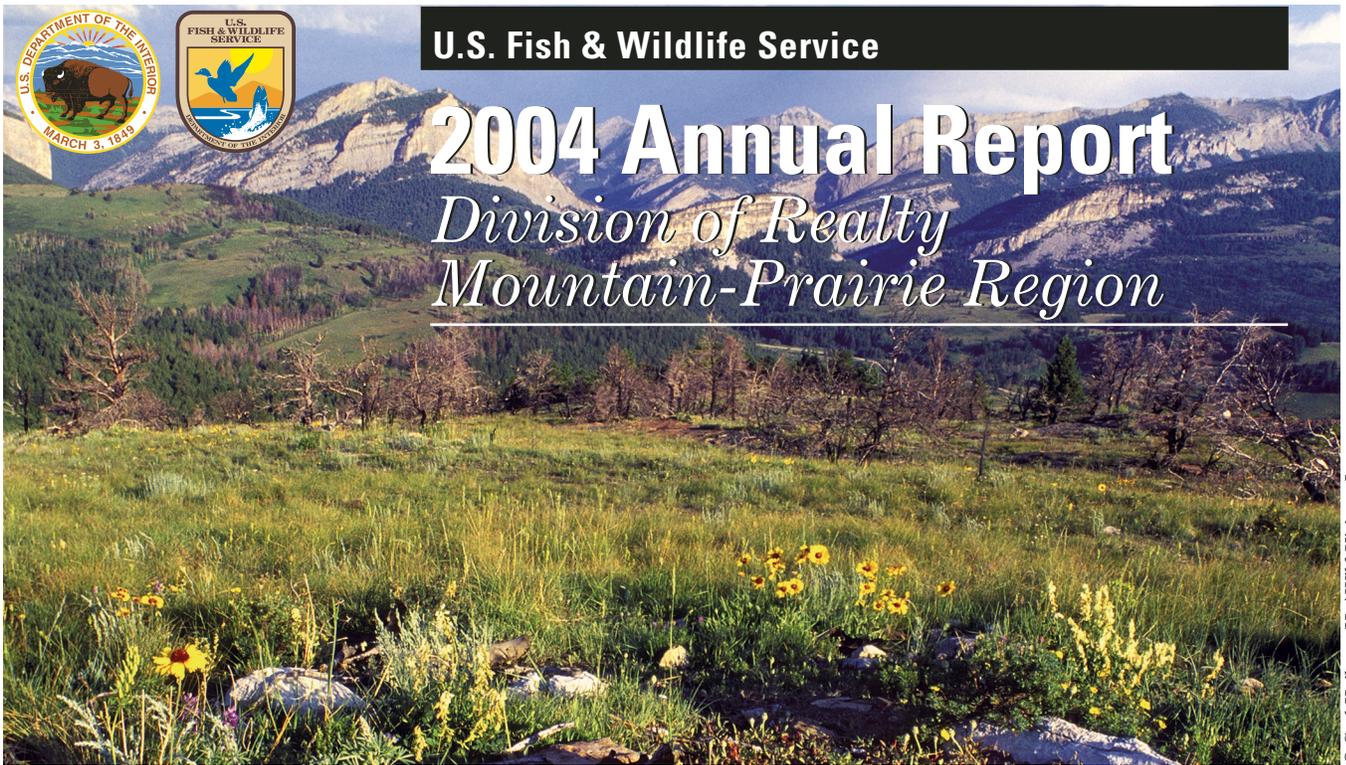




2004 Annual Report

Division of Realty

Mountain-Prairie Region



© Carl Heilman II / Wild Visions, Inc.

Rocky Mountain Front

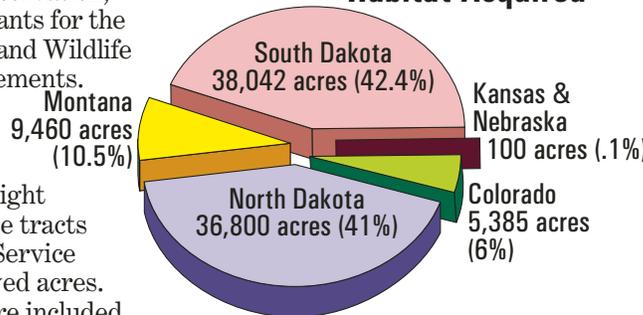
Habitat Highlights

- 89,780 acres of wildlife habitat (fee and easement) were added to the National Wildlife Refuge System by the Mountain-Prairie (Region 6) Realty staff in 2004. Most of the acreage is located in North and South Dakota. Additional land located in Montana, Colorado, Nebraska, and Utah was also brought into the refuge system this year.
- Ducks Unlimited, a valued partner in habitat conservation, funded or obtained grants for the acquisition of 76 Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) easements. These easements will protect 35,270 acres of wildlife habitat. In addition, eight easements and two fee tracts were donated to the Service totaling 2,630 preserved acres. (These 37,900 acres are included in the 89,780 acres above.) The total dollar value of these donated land interests is approximately \$2,533,000.
- The Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service signed the Preliminary Project Proposal to commence a new conservation

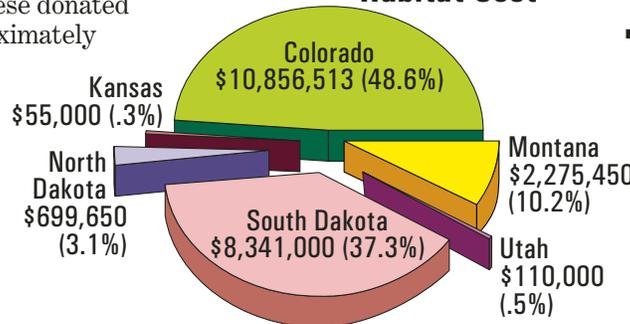
easement initiative known as the Rocky Mountain Front. The goal of this undertaking is to acquire easements on approximately 170,000 acres in Montana along the Flathead Range of the Rocky Mountains. With the exception of free range bison, the area is home to every species of fish and wildlife first observed by the Lewis and Clark expedition through Montana in 1805.

- Approximately 5,000 acres were protected in the Blackfoot Valley, Montana, with conservation easements.
- In the Centennial Valley of Montana, the location of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Realty staff successfully acquired conservation easements protecting 4,400 acres. Notably, almost 1,000 acres of this land is located within the Refuge and is the culmination of a two decade effort. This property has significant stands of old growth spruce and fir that provide habitat to numerous trust species, including grizzly bear. The property includes spawning habitat for Yellowstone cutthroat trout and arctic grayling. Funding for this easement was in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, which donated \$412,500 toward this significant acquisition.
- Exchanges: Several exchanges of land interests were accomplished this year. The outcome of these exchanges resulted in consolidating landholdings in Arapaho NWR (Colorado), and War Horse NWR and Medicine Lake NWR (both located in Montana).

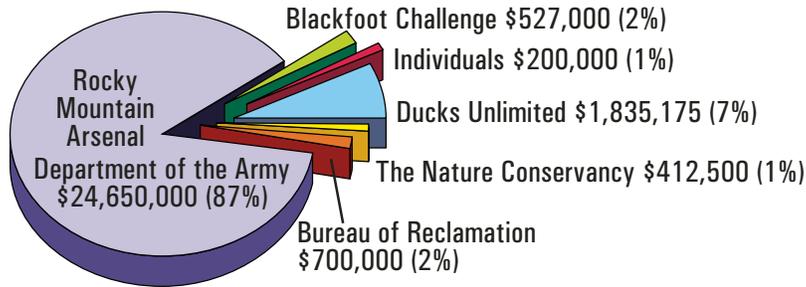
Habitat Acquired



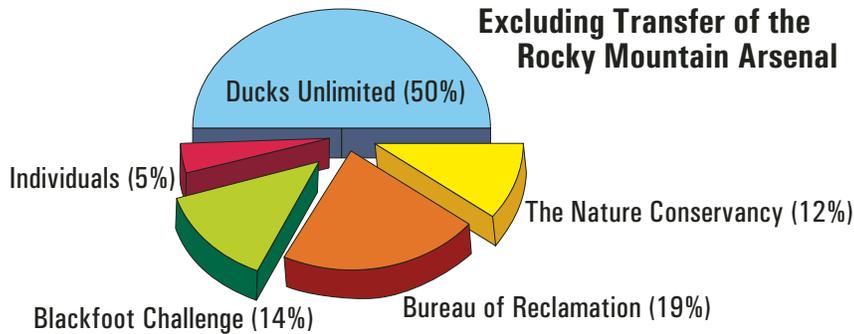
Habitat Cost



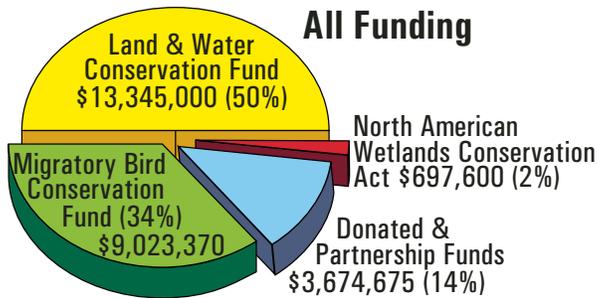
Financial Contributions from Partners



Excluding Transfer of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal



All Funding



New Land & Water Conservation Fund Money for 2005

The FY2005 budget was approved prior to the publication of this document. The Mountain-Prairie Region will receive new LWCF funding in the following amounts:

- \$3,400,000 for Baca NWR (Colorado)
- \$650,000 for Dakota Tallgrass Prairie (South Dakota)

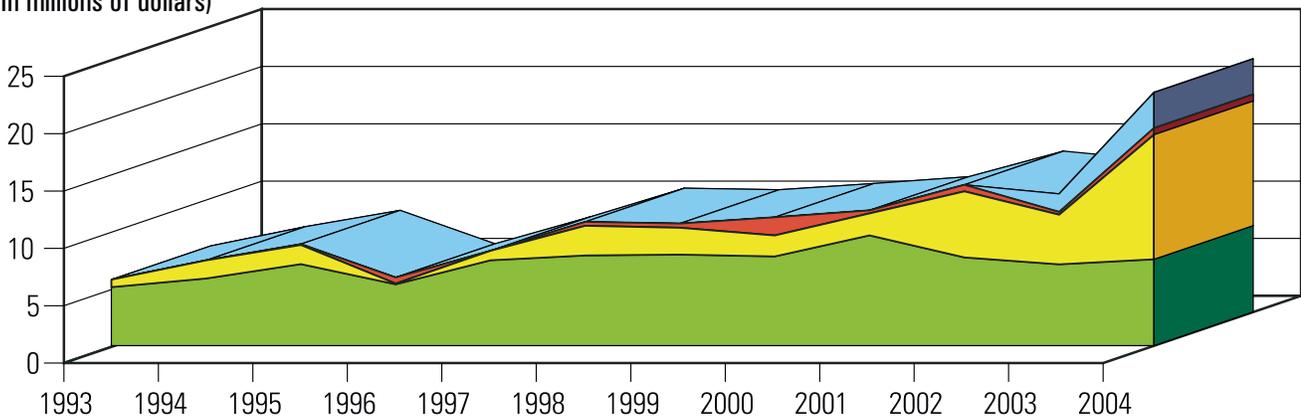


Black Foot River, Montana

USFWS

Region 6 Land Acquisition 1993 - 2004 Dollars Spent

(In millions of dollars)



2004 Funding Summary

Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in the amount of \$13,345,000 accounted for 50% of Region 6's total land acquisition funding in 2004. Remaining Region 6 funding consisted of: Migratory Bird Conservation Fund dollars, \$9,023,370 (34% of the land acquisition budget). Donations and partnership funds accounted for 14% of funding for the purchase of fee tracts and easements (valued at \$1,835,175), while North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant monies contributed \$697,600 (2%) toward the Mountain-Prairie Region's habitat preservation accomplishments.

The majority of the acreage protected in 2004 (primarily by acquisition of wetland and grassland easements) is located in South Dakota, followed by North Dakota. Ducks Unlimited donated grassland easements to the Fish and Wildlife Service which will protect 30,260 acres, while easements covering 5,000 acres were acquired with North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants and Ducks Unlimited matching grants.



Prairie Potholes in North Dakota.



Karen Smith / USFWS

Hairy golden aster and spotted grayfeather

Conservation Success Story – Baca National Wildlife Refuge

In 2000, Congress passed legislation which provided for the establishment of Baca National Wildlife Refuge in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. In 2004, the Service and the National Park Service jointly acquired the historic 97,000 acre Baca Ranch .



USFWS

Moose with twins, Arapaho NWR, Colorado

With the successful acquisition of this dramatic land, 53,500 acres of the Baca Ranch will become part of Baca NWR. Permanent protection of a vast array of wetlands, wet meadows, and uplands is the result of this 4 year acquisition effort. These wetlands provide habitat for a myriad of waterfowl and migratory birds, including greater sandhill cranes. Three national wildlife refuges are now located in this Colorado valley, Baca, Alamosa NWR, and Monte Vista NWR. These refuges offer visitors a unique opportunity to view numerous bird species and the spectacular sight of migrating greater sandhill cranes.

Conservation Easement Acquisitions

In 2004, Region 6 easement acquisitions accounted for 95% of all easement acres added to the National Wildlife Refuge System nationwide. Total easement acres acquired by the Service across the country was 86,675 acres, with Region 6 accounting for 82,380 acres of this total. The majority of habitat protection in the Mountain-Prairie Region is accomplished by the purchase of grassland and wetland easements which reflects Region 6's significant contribution to the conservation efforts of the Service.



Rocky Mountain Front

Pending Projects

- Baca Land Exchange:
Approximately 51,000 acres of State of Colorado owned land lie within the boundaries of the Baca NWR and Great Sand Dunes National Park. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management are currently working with the State of Colorado on a large-scale land exchange. This complicated exchange will result in the transfer of ownership of state-owned acres located within the refuge (approximately 25,000 acres) and within the national park for land managed by the Bureau of Land Management, resulting in consolidation of federally managed lands and state land ownership.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service Realty Field office in Montana is working closely with The Nature Conservancy on a large landscape initiative involving the protection of nearly 88,000 acres of former Plum Creek Timber Company lands in the Blackfoot Valley, Montana watershed. The Service hopes to acquire conservation easements on nearly 10,000 acres of lands in 2005 as part of this ambitious preservation effort.

Additional Montana Activity
Service activity in the Blackfoot Valley, includes a recently signed option to purchase a conservation easement on property in the Ovando Mountain area. This easement would protect over 8,000 acres of wildlife habitat. This transaction is expected to close in 2005 and will become part of the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area.

- Currently, Service Realty staff is working with the Trust for Public Land to acquire three inholdings within Bear River MBR. These parcels are used by a variety of migratory and resident bird species. The approved land protection plan for the refuge includes acquisition of an additional 10,000 acres in fee title and 22,000 acres in conservation easements.



American avocet

Mike Boylan / USFWS

- The Service hopes to work with landowners in northern Colorado to acquire a 3,400 acre ranch located within the boundary of Arapaho NWR. If the Service is successful in acquiring this parcel, less than 1,000 acres of privately owned land would remain within the Refuge.
- In partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), an option for a conservation easement has been acquired on property in the Centennial Valley, Montana. The Centennial Valley Project is a public-private partnership with TNC focused on purchasing conservation easements on private lands surrounding Red Rock Lakes NWR.

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

March 2005



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

"The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."

*National Wildlife Refuge System
Improvement Act of 1997*