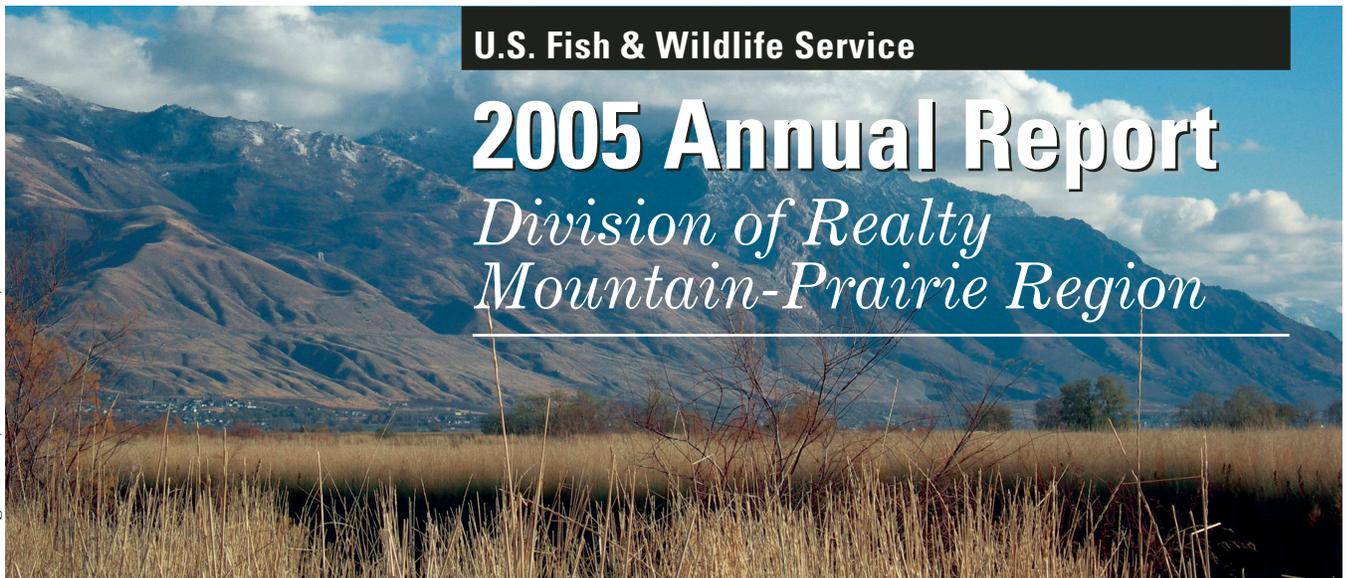


2005 Annual Report

Division of Realty Mountain-Prairie Region



Christensen Tract, Bear River MBR, Utah

Habitat Highlights

- In 2005, 160,913 acres of wildlife habitat were acquired by the Mountain-Prairie Region 6 Realty Division through fee and easement purchases. This acreage is an increase of more than 70,000 acres (fee and easement) from those acquired in 2004 by Realty staff. Most of the acreage acquired is located in North and South Dakota. Additional land was acquired in Montana, Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas.

- Included in the acquired habitat, Ducks Unlimited (DU), a partner in the mission of habitat conservation, donated 53 grassland easements to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) totaling 22,685 acres and valued at \$2,383,025. In addition, DU donated one wetland easement and two grassland easements totaling 614 acres and valued at \$122,475. Along with these contributions, DU contributed an additional \$29,200 towards a fee purchase in South Dakota.

- The Nature Conservancy (TNC), another valued partner in preserving wildlife habitat, donated funds for the acquisition of land in the Blackfoot River Valley and along the Rocky Mountain Front, both in Montana. TNC contributed \$922,000 towards a bargain sale for acquisition of 8,316 acres in the Blackfoot



Ear Mountain, Rocky Mtn. Front, Montana

River Valley. TNC also made a cash contribution of \$875,000 for the purchase of a conservation easement along the Rocky Mountain Front.

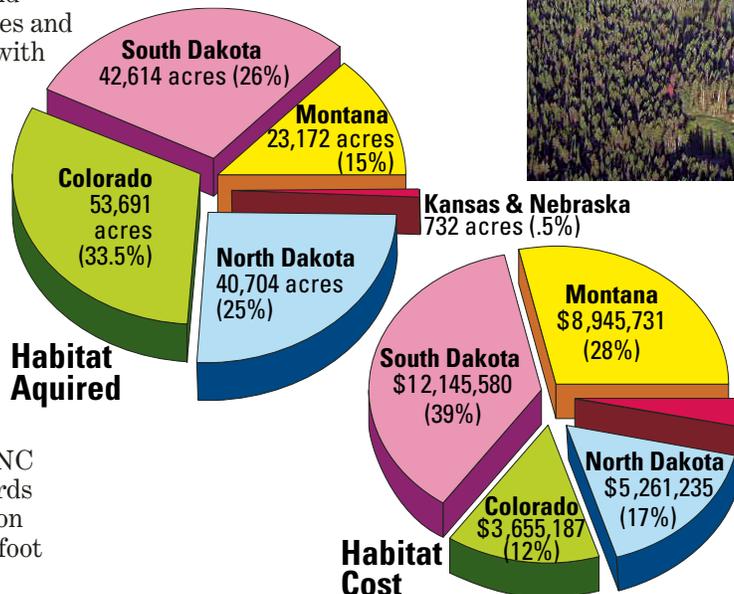
- The Blackfoot Challenge is an organization made up of landowners, State and Federal agencies, individuals, non-profit organizations, local

government representatives, and the Service. The Blackfoot Challenge has played a major role in conservation efforts in the Blackfoot River Valley, Montana, with its main focus to counter land fragmentation and conserve wildlife habitat. In 2005, the Blackfoot Challenge contributed \$527,000 toward a Service acquisition of a conservation easement in the Tupper Lakes area of Powell County, Montana, while the Service used \$445,000 of migratory bird dollars for this transaction.

(Habitat Highlights continued on page 3)



Tupper Lakes in Powell County, Montana



Note: The majority of this acreage was received as a donation.



*Tillemann Shooting Star,
Bowdoin NWR, Montana*

Baca National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange

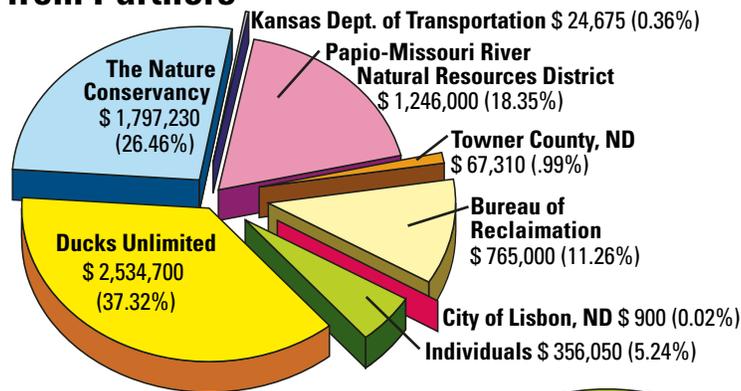
Currently, the Service, the National Park Service (NPS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are working with the State of Colorado on a large-scale land exchange that will transfer approximately 51,000 acres of State-owned land located within Baca NWR and Great Sand Dunes NP to the United States in exchange for approximately 23,000 acres of BLM managed land. The exchange will consolidate State-owned lands and simplify management for both State and Federal agencies. Accomplishment of this land transfer is targeted for completion in 2006.



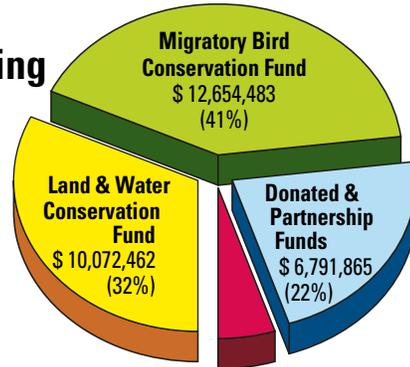
*Northern Pintail
Fish Springs NWR, Utah*

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Financial Contributions from Partners



All Funding



North American Wetlands Conservation Act
\$ 1,637,080 (5%)

Region 6: 2005 Funding Summary

The greatest amount of funding for acquisition of land by Region 6 in 2005 came from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF) in the amount of \$12,654,483, which accounts for 41% of Region 6's 2005 funding. The remaining funds for Region 6 consisted of: Land and Water Conservation Funds in the amount of \$10,072,462 (32%), North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants in the amount of \$1,637,080 (5%), and a total of \$6,791,865 in monies from

partnerships and donations made to the Service, which accounted for 22% of Region 6 funding. A significant portion of the NAWCA funds were contributed by Ducks Unlimited. The majority of the acreage protected was through wetland and grassland easements purchased in North and South Dakota. In addition, grassland easement donations made by Ducks Unlimited will protect over 20,000 acres in North and South Dakota.

New Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Money for 2006

The FY2006 congressional budget was approved prior to the publication of this report. The Fish & Wildlife Service Mountain-Prairie Region will receive new LWCF funding in the following amounts:

- \$1 Million for Rocky Mountain Front (Montana)
- \$500,000 for Dakota Tallgrass Prairie (South Dakota)

2005 Conservation Easement Acquisitions

Region 6 easement acquisitions accounted for 96% of the easement acres added to the National Wildlife Refuge System nationwide. Of the total 109,357 acres acquired through easements, Region 6 was responsible for 104,744 acres. The majority of habitat protection in Region 6 is accomplished by purchase of grassland and wetland easements in both North and South Dakota.



Kansas Grayfeather

Realty Contributions Praised

In 2005, the Division of Realty staff, Mountain-Prairie Region, conducted a realty conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. This conference provided the realty staff an opportunity to meet and interact with Service Refuge leadership and take part in several training sessions. William Hartwig, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), spoke at the conference. Mr. Hartwig praised the contributions that the Realty program makes to the NWRS and observed that the habitat conservation accomplishments of the Realty program are immeasurable. Other speakers at the conference included: Region 6 Regional Director, Ralph Morgenweck; Region 6 Chief of Refuges, Rick Coleman; and Region 6 Chief of Realty, Harvey Wittmier. Eric Alvarez, Chief of the Division of Realty in the Washington Office, also attended and spoke about the future goals for the Division of Realty.

John Esperance, Branch Chief for the Division of Planning, provided an overview of the Division of Realty planning process. Mr. Esperance included an explanation of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) requirements in planning and how compliance with NEPA precedes any land acquisition or refuge expansion.

On the final day of the conference, the Realty staff visited Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (MBR) in Utah and toured a new refuge visitor center scheduled to open in Spring, 2006. The visit provided a rare opportunity for Realty employees to observe migratory birds utilizing wetland habitat that Fish and Wildlife staff have helped preserve. The Bear River Hunting Club generously hosted a luncheon for the staff at the end of the tour.



Visitor Center, Bear River MBR, Utah



Conservation Easement, Centennial Valley, Montana

Habitat Highlights

(continued from page 1)

The Service protected 4,140 acres through a conservation easement acquisition in the Centennial Valley, Montana, with the landowner generously donating \$80,000 in value in order to successfully close the transaction. This easement on the north side of Red Rock Lakes NWR borders the national forest and is comprised of diverse wildlife habitat. Species that frequent this property include sage grouse, grizzly bear and elk.



Nathan's Lake, Boyer Chute NWR, Nebraska

Donation at Boyer Chute NWR

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District (NRD), in Omaha, Nebraska, made a significant contribution to the NWRS in 2005. The NRD acquired 710 acres several years ago with the intent to restore wetlands and grasslands and eventually donate the property to Boyer Chute NWR. The NRD's Board of Directors approved the donation, valued at over \$1 million, which will benefit wildlife. This donation follows a 2,000 acre NRD donation in the early 1990's to the Service that resulted in the establishment of Boyer Chute NWR. The Service greatly appreciates this long term partnership and the generous contributions of the NRD.



Conservation Easement, Rocky Mountain Front, Montana

Pending Projects

- A proposed land exchange between Cokeville Meadows NWR in Wyoming and the BLM is in the initiation stage. This exchange involves land tracts managed by the BLM located within the Refuge boundary and several land parcels managed by the Service, but located outside the Refuge boundary. Not only will this exchange facilitate improved management capabilities for both agencies, it will also preserve and protect wetland and riparian habitat for migratory waterfowl. The exchange will also protect habitat for big and small game, upland game birds, and provide public educational and interpretive opportunities.
- Currently, the Division of Realty is in the process of acquiring two properties at the Bear River MBR. Both Refuge acquisition projects will be bridged by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) — that is, TPL will acquire the land, and then subsequently, the Service will purchase the property from TPL when funding becomes available. In addition to the two fee acquisitions, Realty staff are working to acquire non-development easements from several landowners. The properties are zoned for commercial development, and in an effort to save valuable wildlife habitat the Service is pursuing easement opportunities.

**U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Region 6, NWRS, Division of Realty
P.O. Box 25486, Denver Federal
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Denver, Colorado 80225**

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

January 2006



- In cooperation with Commerce City, Colorado, the Service has commenced work on a land exchange which would result in the transfer of approximately 150 acres owned by the City to the United States to become part of Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR. The City would receive 40 acres strategically located adjacent to two major roadways. This exchange would help protect short grass prairie, a dominant feature of this urban refuge, while also benefiting species such as burrowing owls, deer, and a large population of bald eagles.



Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR, Colorado