

2007 Annual Report

Division of Realty

Mountain-Prairie Region



Northern Coteau / © Ducks Unlimited

Habitat Highlights

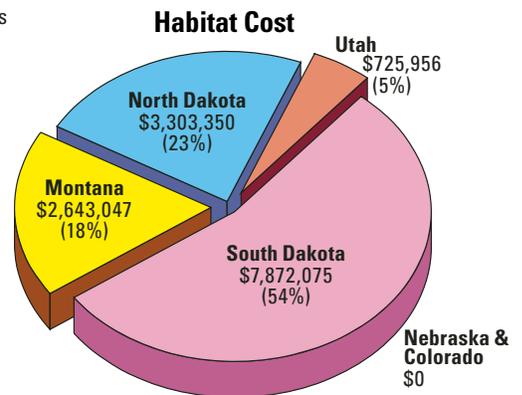
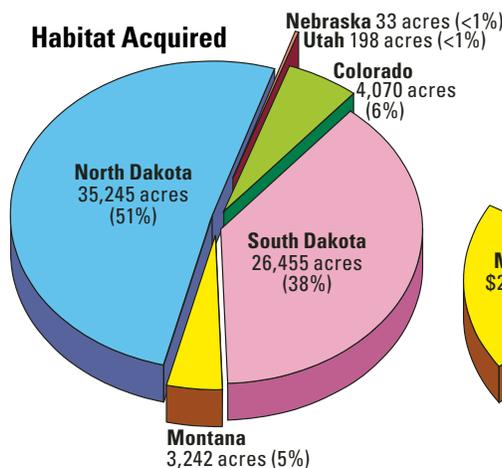
In 2007 69,243 acres of fish and wildlife habitat were added to the National Wildlife Refuge System by the Mountain-Prairie (Region 6) Realty staff. Nearly ninety percent (61,700 acres) of this habitat work was accomplished through the purchase of wetland and grassland easements in North and South Dakota. Additional habitat in Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Nebraska was also added to the Refuge System this year.

The Small Wetlands Acquisition Program continues to be the cornerstone of Region 6's land acquisition program. Ducks Unlimited (DU) remains instrumental in this effort, having provided over \$15,600,000 to the Service's habitat protection program across the Prairie Pothole Region during the past 10 years. In 2007, DU donated 60 wetland and grassland easements to protect 21,382 acres in North

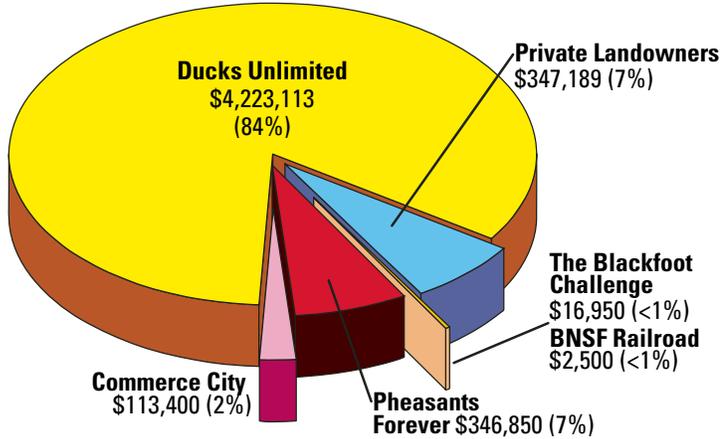
and South Dakota at a value of \$4,174,550. In addition, DU provided \$48,563 to purchase 33 acres in fee for a Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) in Nebraska. The Service greatly appreciates this long-term partnership and the generous contributions of DU, the nation's leading wetland conservation organization.

In Montana, the Service worked closely with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to acquire the single, largest remaining inholding within Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The Murphy Creek Ranch was purchased by TNC with the eventual goal of adding 7,574 acres (4,308 acres in fee and 3,266 acres of State lease lands) to the Refuge. The initial phase of this multi-year project involved the fee purchase of 1,284 acres from

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Financial Contributions from Partners

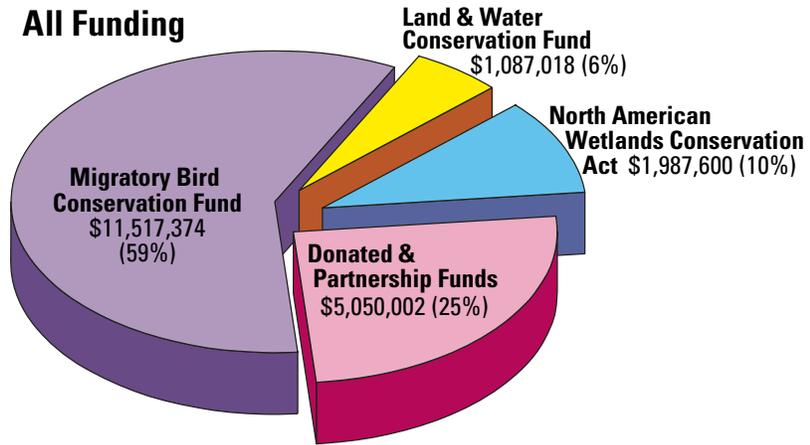


Northern Shoveler / Jim Stutzman, USFWS

2007 Funding Summary

The Migratory Bird Conservation Fund provided \$11,517,374 or 59% of the Mountain-Prairie Region's total land acquisition and lease funding in 2007. The remaining funds consisted of Land and Water Conservation Funds in the amount of \$1,087,018 (6%) and North American Wetland Conservation Act Grants awards totaling \$1,987,600 (10%). Donations and partnership funds made to the Service accounted for \$5,050,002 or approximately 25% of the total cost for habitat protection in Region 6.

All Funding

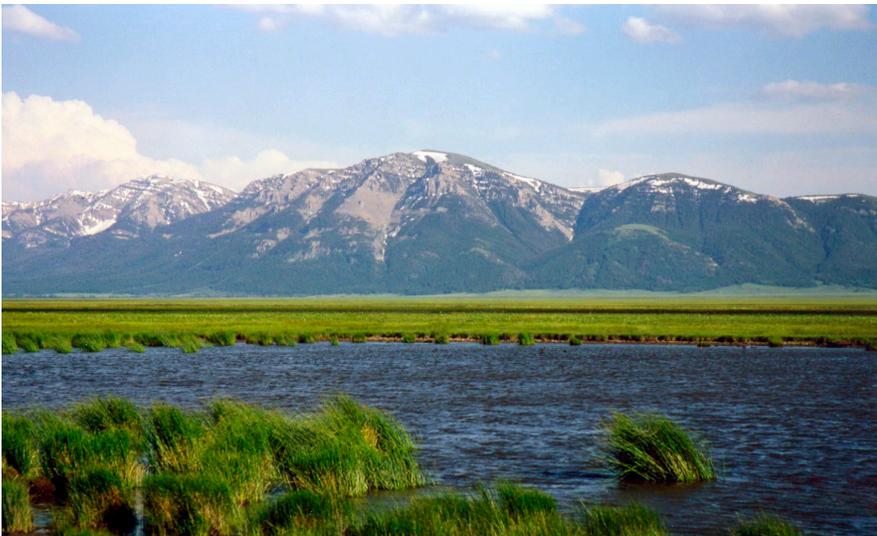


Habitat Highlights

(Continued from page 1)

TNC using \$2,083,218 of Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF) monies. The Service plans to complete phase 2 early in FY08 which involves the acquisition of an additional 875 acres in fee and 3,266 acres of lease lands from the State of Montana. The property contains 1,050 wetland acres and provides important breeding habitat for 21 species of waterfowl and 35 species of other wetland-dependent birds. In addition, this parcel includes several important water rights that, once acquired, will ensure future water supplies for Red Rock Lakes NWR, the largest wetland complex in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

The Service accepted the transfer of 3,963 acres from the Department of Energy for the establishment of the Rocky Flats NWR. Rocky Flats,



Red Rock Lakes NWR, Montana / USFWS



American Goldfinch
Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR
Steve Berendzen, USFWS



North Branch of Rock Creek, Rocky Flats NWR, Colorado
USFWS

Habitat Highlights *(Continued from page 2)*

a former nuclear weapons plant located just 16 miles northwest of Denver, is the newest urban refuge to be added to the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Environmental Protection Agency certified the cleanup and closure of the site before the transfer was completed. The Refuge features a rare, xeric tallgrass prairie plant community along with other important wetland and riparian areas that provide habitat for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, a Federal threatened species.

The Service, working in partnership with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHA), acquired



Preble's meadow jumping mouse
USFWS



Bear River MBR, Utah / USFWS

a 197.59 acre private inholding at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in northern Utah. TPL purchased the property, and wetland mitigation funding was provided to the Service by the FHA to complete the acquisition. Two hundred and ten species of migratory birds utilize wetlands on the Refuge, the largest freshwater component of the Great Salt Lake Ecosystem.

An additional 520 acres was acquired within the 1.1 million acre Charles M. Russell (CMR) NWR in eastern Montana. The Conservation Fund (TCF), a valued partner at CMR, purchased the property back in 2004 and held it until the Service was

able to secure funding (\$228,700) for the project. This acquisition involved three separate tracts comprised of native grasslands that provide excellent antelope and sharp-tailed grouse habitat.

In cooperation with Commerce City, Colorado, the Service completed a land exchange that resulted in the acquisition of one 147 acre parcel for the Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR. Three isolated parcels totaling 42 acres were divested to the local municipality to accommodate their plans for expansion of two major highways adjacent to the Refuge. Commerce City donated the \$113,400 difference

(Continued on page 4)



Rocky Mountain Front NWR, sunrise at Crawford wetland

© The Nature Conservancy

Pending Projects

The Service continues to work with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Park Service, and the State of Colorado on a large-scale land exchange that will transfer 51,000 acres of State-owned land located within Baca NWR and Great Sand Dunes National Park to the United States in exchange for approximately 23,000 acres of BLM managed land. The exchange, scheduled for completion in 2008, will consolidate State-owned lands and simplify management for each of the respective agencies.

Efforts continued on a large landscape initiative to protect the Rocky Mountain Front in north-central Montana. The Service established the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area in 2006, which authorized the acquisition of 170,000 acres of conservation easements within a 561,700 acre project boundary. Landowner interest far exceeds available funding and the Service has worked closely with TNC and TCF to explore additional funding opportunities. To date, TNC and TCF have received pledges in excess of \$20 million from private donors that can be used to purchase conservation easements from willing sellers within the project area. The Service looks



forward to working with these partners to secure easements on two large ranches totaling over 20,000 acres in 2008.

The Service continued to work on implementing the Charles M. Russell NWR Enhancement Act. The law requires divestiture of 367 recreational cabin sites on Corps of Engineers (COE) administered lands within the boundaries of the Refuge. During the 1960s, the COE began leasing parcels of Federal land around Fort Peck Reservoir for recreational cabin use, and the biological importance of these areas has long been compromised. To mitigate for the loss of wildlife habitat, the law requires that revenues generated from the sale of the cabins be used solely by the Service to acquire important habitat within or adjacent to the Refuge. The Service and COE hope to begin selling cabins in the fall of 2008. Expected revenues should enable the Service to acquire as much as 40,000 acres of additional habitat for the Refuge.

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Habitat Highlights

(Continued from page 3)

in the appraised value between the properties. This exchange protects additional sand sagebrush habitat, a dominant feature of this urban refuge, while also benefiting species such as burrowing owls, mule deer, and large numbers of bald eagles.

Other significant donations included a 492 acre wetland and grassland easement tract from Pheasants Forever in Brookings County, South Dakota, valued at \$346,850 and a 147 acre conservation easement donated by a private landowner in the Blackfoot River Valley of Montana, appraised at \$353,939.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) continues to provide significant funding for the Region 6 land acquisition program. A total of \$1,987,600 was used to acquire 43 grassland easements and 9 wetland easements in North Dakota totaling 14,002 acres.

Northern Coteau
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