



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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MIGRATORY BIRD COMMISSION APPROVES FUNDING FOR WETLAND CONSERVATION EFFORTS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

Ducks, geese and other wildlife will continue to benefit from 58,000 acres of wetland habitat from New Jersey to Texas to Manitoba, Canada, because of more than \$11 million in land acquisition and enhancement funding recently approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

"With wetland habitat increasingly under pressure, the money raised by waterfowl hunters, other wildlife lovers and stamp collectors through their Duck Stamp purchases is vital to preserving our nation's waterfowl, shorebirds and a myriad of other wildlife," said Secretary of Interior Manuel Lujan, who chairs the Commission. The Commission, the advisory body responsible for administering the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and reviewing requests for monetary assistance from the North American Wetland Conservation Fund, approved 25 projects to buy, lease, or otherwise enhance wetland habitat.

Eight of these projects, covering 7,700 acres, will be paid for with \$4.8 million from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. The fund consists primarily of money received from the sale of the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (the Federal "Duck Stamp") that must be purchased by all waterfowl hunters 16 years and older. By law, this money must be used to acquire waterfowl habitat.

In each case, the new land will be added to existing National Wildlife Refuges. The projects include: 985 acres at Brazoria NWR in Texas (\$351,000); 34 acres at Lower Hatchie NWR in Tennessee (\$34,824); 615 acres at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR in New Jersey (\$477,051); 3,237 acres at Morgan Brake NWR in Mississippi (\$2.4 million); 2,000 acres at Roanoke River NWR in North

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Carolina (\$985,000); 1,138 acres at Tallahatchie NWR in Mississippi (\$546,000); 40 acres at Cache River NWR in Arkansas (\$42,000); and 240 acres at Arapaho NWR in Colorado (\$1,354).

The Commission also approved \$6.8 million for 17 projects under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. This legislation provides partial funding for wetlands conservation projects in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Funds come from interest on Federal excise taxes on hunting equipment sales, fines from violators of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and private contributions.

The money is used to acquire and enhance critical wetland habitats for wetland wildlife, including many threatened and endangered plant and animal species. The projects were recommended to the Commission by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, a public and private body that evaluates U.S. projects.

The biggest projects approved were \$1.9 million to acquire and manage 7,000 acres of cypress swamp at Caddo Lake in northeastern Texas and \$1.3 million to protect and enhance 6,000 acres of critical shorebird areas in the Maurice River on the New Jersey side of the Delaware Bay.

The State of Texas and the Texas Nature Conservancy have contributed an additional \$1.9 million for the Caddo Lake project, which will protect habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including endangered and threatened animals.

The Maurice River tracts are home to the world's largest population of globally endangered plants, and the coastline provides vital habitat for 60 percent of the world's population of shorebirds. The State of New Jersey and The Nature Conservancy have contributed \$2.8 million to this project.

Other projects approved by the Commission include:

-- \$800,000 to acquire 1,600 acres for the Ding Darling Marsh project in Pocahontas County, Iowa; restore a 300-acre historical recreational lake; reestablish native prairies, and provide for a diversity of prairie wildlife. State and private partners will contribute \$950,000.

-- \$450,000 to restore 450 acres of Lake Erie shoreline marshes and create islands and shallow flats at Pickeral Creek in Sandusky County, Ohio. The project will enhance nesting, feeding, and migrating habitats for shorebirds, endangered species, raptors and waterfowl. State and private partners will contribute \$655,000 to the project.

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-- \$474,000 to restore 23,000 acres of seasonal and permanent wetlands on private lands in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas through voluntary agreements. More than 100 private landowners will benefit through reduced water erosion, ground water recharge, flood control, and increased wildlife populations. State and private partners will contribute \$1.2 million.

-- A total of \$1.8 million was approved for 12 projects in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. The money will be used to supplement wetlands conservation projects that benefit threatened and endangered animal and plant species, shorebirds, waterfowl and other wetland wildlife. U.S. and Canadian partners contributed \$3.4 million.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission is made up of Lujan, Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William Reilly, U.S. Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and David Pryor of Arkansas, and Representatives John Dingell of Michigan and Richard Schulze of Pennsylvania. So far in Fiscal Year 1992, the Commission has approved \$50 million for 88 projects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.