



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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COMMISSION APPROVES REFUGE EXPANSIONS AND \$5.3 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR 14 WETLANDS PROJECTS IN CANADA

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission gave approval June 14, 1994, for new boundaries and prices at 9 national wildlife refuges in the United States and for \$5.3 million in grants for 14 projects to protect and improve wetlands in Canada.

The \$5.3 million from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund was nearly doubled by \$9.4 million in matching contributions from Canadian and U.S. partners, bringing the total available for on-the-ground work in Canada to \$15.8 million.

"The successes of this program speak for itself," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, who chairs the Cabinet-Congressional level Commission. "I strongly support the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the nearly full funding requested by this Administration to continue the important work it's doing across the continent for waterfowl, wetland ecosystems, and biological diversity," he said in opening the meeting.

In passing legislation establishing the Fund in 1989, Congress made matching conservation grants available to Canada and Mexico because habitat in the two countries is essential for migratory birds to survive and thrive. Most waterfowl and other migratory birds enjoyed by wildlife enthusiasts in this country are produced and reared in Canada, and then migrate to more southerly wintering grounds, many to Mexico but some as far south as the tip of South America.

"I'm especially pleased that we're able to look beyond our own borders to help conserve wildlife habitat on a continental, partnership basis that brings \$2 to the table for conservation for every \$1 provided by the Fund," said Mollie Beattie, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "I'm also pleased that we're able to provide permanent protection for important wildlife habitat on our national wildlife refuges."

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Boundary and price approval were granted under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act for the following national wildlife refuges, all of which are priority areas under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and will be acquired with Migratory Bird Conservation Fund receipts.

Connecticut--Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), to add 341 acres of one of the last unditched salt marshes on the Connecticut coast, important as waterfowl habitat;

Louisiana--Bayou Cocodrie NWR, to approve the boundary of 17,333 acres of bottomland hardwoods and swamps; Catahoula NWR, to add 1,855 acres to provide a greater diversity of wildlife habitat; and at Lake Ophelia, to approve the boundary of 38,857 acres of bottomland hardwoods and swamps;

Minnesota--to add 70 acres to Hamden Slough NWR, recognized as an outstanding waterfowl production area;

New Jersey--to add 222 acres of open tidal salt marsh to Cape May NWR, a major migration stopover for millions of shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors;

Texas--to add a wetland complex of 3,140 acres to Brazoria NWR for waterfowl, shorebirds, neotropical birds, and other species; to approve acquisition by fee and easement of 11,440 acres of migrating and wintering habitat for 23 species of ducks and other wildlife at McFaddin NWR; and to approve the boundary at Trinity River NWR by 20,110 acres of one of the few remaining high quality forest habitats in the river basin.

In Canada, the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund grants will help fund eight projects in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island); five projects in the Plan's Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba); and one in the Pacific Coast Joint Venture (British Columbia). The funds will be used to manage and improve thousands of acres of previously secured wetlands and to secure additional habitat important to endangered species such as the piping plover, waterfowl, and other migratory birds.

Since the Fund was established, \$110 million in grants has been matched by \$212 million in partner funds in support of 289 projects in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. An additional 175 projects requesting grants of \$64.5 million have been submitted and are awaiting funding.