



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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**COMMISSION APPROVES ACQUISITION OF MIGRATORY BIRD
HABITAT AT 10 REFUGES AND \$13.2 MILLION IN GRANTS
FOR WETLANDS CONSERVATION PROJECTS**

The National Wildlife Refuge System grew by nearly 8,900 acres this month as the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved acquisition of habitat at 10 refuges and the boundary expansion of 3 of those units at its September 13, 1994, meeting at the Department of the Interior in Washington, DC.

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt chairs the Cabinet-Congressional-level commission, which also approved \$13.2 million in grants for 28 wetlands conservation projects in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The grants from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund were matched by \$29.2 million in contributions by other agency and individual partners, bringing the total to \$42.4 million for wetland conservation projects across the continent.

"This is an impressive program that mustn't lose its momentum," Secretary Babbitt said. "I'm going to devote myself over the next few days and weeks to ensuring adequate funding levels for this program that leverages so many dollars and pays such tremendous dividends." Commission members Representatives John Dingell of Michigan and Curt Weldon of Pennsylvania, along with Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi, pledged to assist the Secretary in this effort.

Secretary Babbitt noted the improved status of ducks this year and commended the commission for its work in making habitat available. "I was out birdwatching at 5 a.m. this past Sunday, just outside Washington," he said. "It was extraordinary to see hundreds and hundreds of migratory birds right next to the Nation's Capital. The lesson is: if you provide the habitat, the birds will find their way to it."

The proposals approved for acquisition of national wildlife refuge lands under the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund include:

Arkansas--Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), acquisition of 102 acres and the addition of 600 acres to the refuge boundary;

Louisiana--Bayou Cocodrie NWR, 1,451 acres;

Mississippi--Dahomey NWR, 260 acres (lease) and approval of 11,460 acres previously established with other funding; Morgan Brake NWR, 40 acres; St. Catherine Creek NWR, 340 acres;

New Jersey--Cape May NWR, addition and acquisition of 18.2 acres; Edwin B. Forsythe NWR, addition of 1,039 acres to the refuge boundary and acquisition of 132 acres;

New York--Montezuma NWR, 366 acres;

Utah--Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, 6,037 acres; and

Virginia--Back Bay NWR, 117 acres.

Expenditures approved by the Commission for refuge acquisitions come from the sale of Duck Stamps, the \$15 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp that must be purchased by waterfowl hunters aged 16 and older. The National Wildlife Refuge System was established in 1903 and covers some 91.5 million acres of wildlife habitat in every state and several of the territories.

All of the refuge additions support the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international agreement among Canada, the U.S., and Mexico to rebuild waterfowl populations by protecting and restoring their wetlands habitats.

Federal monies for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund come from appropriations and interest and fines on wildlife-related accounts. The following grants were awarded:

Mexico--two grants in Yucatan and Sonora for \$157,408 with a match of \$185,255;

Canada--10 grants in the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (JV), Prairie Habitat JV, and Pacific Coast JV for \$2,964,090 with a match of \$5,578,910; and

United States--16 grants for \$10,126,629 matched by \$23,718,910.

U.S. Grants:

Delaware--\$965,000 to The Nature Conservancy for the Muller Wetlands;

Florida--\$95,000 to the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission for the Thomas M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area;

Indiana--(first in the state) \$1.5 million to the Lake County Heritage Park Foundation for the Indiana Grand Kankakee Marsh;

Iowa--\$400,000 to the Department of Natural Resources for the Eagle Lake Wetland Complex and \$500,000 also to the Department of Natural Resources for the Cedar River Wildlife Management Ecosystem;

Maine--\$700,000 to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for the Cobscook Bay Project;

Maryland--\$1 million to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for Savanna Lake, part of the Fishing Bay Wildlife Management Area (WMA);

North Dakota--\$518,879 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for the Chase Lake Area Wetland Project and \$352,000 to the Service for the Mouse River Watershed Project;

Oklahoma--\$960,000 to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for Hackberry Flat;

South Carolina--\$200,000 to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for the Samworth WMA;

South Dakota--\$59,750 to the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts for projects on private lands;

Texas--\$155,000 to Ducks Unlimited, Inc. for private lands projects in 28 counties;

Washington--\$1,235,000 to the Washington Department of Natural Resources for Beardslee Slough;

West Virginia--(first grant in the state) \$100,000 to the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources for the Meadow River wetlands; and

Wisconsin--\$1,386,000 to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the Northwest Pothole Habitat Initiative.