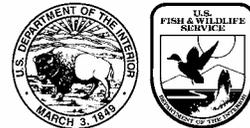


News Release



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Interior Secretary Announces Funding for Pacific Region Wetlands Projects

Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced today that the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has approved \$2 million in small grants – including \$285,000 in Oregon, Washington and California -- for habitat conservation projects that will benefit migratory birds.

Nationwide, these small grants will fund 43 projects in 22 States and Puerto Rico to protect or restore nearly 12,000 acres of wetlands and associated upland habitats. Project partners will provide an additional \$11 million toward the projects.

At the same time, the Commission on June 9 also approved the acquisition of more than 3,500 acres of important migratory bird habitat to be added to the National Wildlife Refuge System in Michigan, Texas and West Virginia. The Commission approved more than \$6.4 million in Federal Duck Stamp funds to acquire these lands. All acquisitions were previously approved by the affected states.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) authorizes the funding of grants to states and other partners to meet important habitat goals for migratory birds.

"President Bush's support for wetlands conservation was clearly evident when he approved the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, renewing that commitment and supporting increased funding through this outstanding public-private partnership program," said Secretary Norton, who chairs the Commission. "Wetlands provide excellent habitat for wildlife and provide millions of Americans with a broad range of outdoor recreational opportunities."

Working with Partners to Conserve Wetlands

Since 1996, the Small Grant Program and 665 partners have funded more than 239 projects in the United States. The partners added more than \$69 million to more than \$10.2 million in grants to conserve some 81,271 acres of habitats in the United States.

In Canada, the Commission also approved more than \$16 million for 19 projects in Canada. Partners added more than \$22 million to conserve more than 1 million acres of wetlands.

"Since many of North America's waterfowl species are dependent on breeding habitat in Canada it is important that we use our NAWCA funds to conserve habitat there as well," said Service Director Steve Williams.

Funding for this program comes from Congressional appropriations, funds collected from fines, penalties, and forfeitures under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, interest accrued to the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, and from excise taxes paid on small engine fuels through the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act.

The Small Grants projects in the Pacific Region are:

Washington: Sares Bluff Conservation Project, Fidalgo Island (\$50,000) (grantee: San Juan Preservation Trust)

Skidmore Slough Estuarine Wetlands Conservation Project (\$50,000) (grantee: Sportsmen's National Land Trust, Inc.)

Island Venter Marsh Acquisition (\$50,000) (grantee: Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust)

Oregon: Alder Creek Farm (\$50,000) (grantee: Lower Nehalem Community Trust)

California: Ormond Beach Bird Habitat Restoration Project (\$35,000) (grantee: Western Alliance for Nature)

Federal Duck Stamp Revenues for Conservation

"Sportsmen and women have contributed a great deal to the development of the National Wildlife Refuge System," Norton said. "Money raised by the sale of Federal Duck Stamps pays for these land acquisitions. Since the first Duck Stamp sale in 1934, nearly \$700 million has been raised to purchase more than five million acres of wetlands for the refuge system."

New National Wildlife Refuge System acquisitions approved by the Conservation Commission are:

Michigan: Acquisition of 409 acres to protect wetlands for migratory waterfowl within the boundaries of Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in Wayne County.

Texas: Acquisition of 43 acres to protect wetlands for migratory waterfowl within the boundaries of Anahuac NWR in Galveston County.

Texas: Acquisition of 2,681 acres to protect wetlands for migratory waterfowl within the boundaries of McFaddin NWR in Galveston County.

Texas: Acquisition of 225 acres to protect wetlands for migratory waterfowl within the boundaries of San Bernard NWR in Brazoria County.

West Virginia: Acquisition of 155 acres to protect wetlands for migratory waterfowl within the boundaries of Canaan Valley NWR in Tucker County.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 established the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to approve land to be purchased for the National Wildlife Refuge System with monies from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. The fund is supported by revenue collected from Federal Duck Stamp sales, import duties collected on arms and ammunition, right-of-way payments to the refuge system, and receipts from national wildlife refuge entry fees. For more information about the Federal Duck Stamp program please visit

<<http://duckstamps.fws.gov>>.

The Commission meets three times a year to approve funding proposals. Permanent Commission members are Interior Secretary Norton, Senators Thad Cochran and John Breaux; Representatives John Dingell and Curt Weldon; Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman; and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Mike Leavitt.

For more information on NAWCA, please see <<http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NAWCA/grants.htm>>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
visit our homepage at <<http://www.fws.gov>>.*