

The federal Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has approved more than \$26 million in grants to protect and restore more than 200,000 acres of wetland areas and wildlife habitat in the United States and Mexico. The commission awarded the grants under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). They also approved \$11.5 million in Federal Duck Stamp funds to add more than 3,500 wetland acres to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The commission, headed by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, includes Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, Representative John Dingell of Michigan, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, as well as state representatives serving as ex officio members who vote on projects located within their respective states.

More than \$24.2 million in NAWCA grant funds will support 25 projects in 21 states and Puerto Rico, with partners contributing an additional \$60.6 million in matching funds to help protect, restore and enhance almost 185,000 acres. Nearly \$2 million for seven projects will help protect 2,470 acres of habitat in Mexico, with partners contributing an additional \$3.5 million the projects.

The grants were awarded under NAWCA's U.S. Standard Grants and Mexico Grants Programs administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the Department of the Interior. They are funded by annual Congressional appropriations; fines, penalties and forfeitures levied under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; interest accrued on funds under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and excise taxes paid on small engine fuels through the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Fund.

The commission also approved the purchase of wetland habitat that will be added to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge System to secure breeding, resting and feeding habitat. These acquisitions are funded with proceeds from sales of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, otherwise known as the Federal Duck Stamps. These acquisitions include:

Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, Camden, Gates and Pasquotank Counties, North Carolina – Acquisition of 51 acres to protect, restore and maintain habitat for breeding, migrating and wintering waterfowl.

San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, Brazoria and Matagorda Counties, Texas – Acquisition of 1,454 acres to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl species, including mallard, gadwall, and northern pintail.

Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, Pondicherry Divisions, Coos County, New Hampshire – Acquisition of 80 acres to preserve and protect important migratory waterfowl habitat, and provide feeding, nesting and resting habitat.

Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge, Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes, Louisiana – Acquisition of 265 acres to protect and enhance seasonally and permanently flooded wetlands for migrating and wintering waterfowl.

Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, Wapato Lake Unit, Washington and Yamhill Counties, Oregon – Acquisition of 225 acres to manage as a migration and wintering area for waterfowl, especially tundra swans.

North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area, Colusa County, California – Acquisition of 388 acres to protect, restore, and maintain wetlands for waterfowl and other migratory birds.

Grasslands Wildlife Management Area, Merced County, California – A permanent easement of 1,077 acres protecting and enhancing a major wintering area for migratory waterfowl.