



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Megan Durham (202) 343-5634

SOUTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE TO BENEFIT FROM DUCKS UNLIMITED DONATION

South Dakota wildlife will reap the benefits of a \$1.4 million donation by Ducks Unlimited, Inc., (DU) to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Secretary of the Interior Don Hodel said the DU grant, the largest cash donation ever made to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, would be used for acquisition of wildlife habitat in South Dakota, a major waterfowl producing State. He said the Service would work closely with State and county governments and private citizens in determination of wetlands and other wildlife habitats available for the program.

Ducks Unlimited is the Nation's largest private waterfowl organization, with more than 600,000 members. It has been involved in hundreds of wetland habitat improvement projects in Canada since 1938, and began its first United States projects in North Dakota in 1984. Since then, DU has completed a number of wildlife projects in the United States and planned many more.

Most of North America's ducks are produced in the Canadian provinces, but the most important production area in the 48 contiguous States is the prairie pothole country of the Dakotas, western Minnesota, and eastern Montana.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission will oversee the expenditure of the donated funds from Ducks Unlimited. Secretary Hodel serves as chairman of the Commission.

"Wetlands conservation is an investment in the future," Hodel said during a December ceremony at which the \$1.4 million donation was accepted for the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund.

"While wetland values to wildlife and fisheries are readily apparent," he said, "they also serve the added function of controlling floods, restoring water quality, and recharging groundwater."

"Their preservation is simply good stewardship for the next generation," he said.

Hodel said preservation of the lands acquired with the donations would be "a fine example" of the Department's "Take Pride in America" program--an effort to encourage all Americans to share a greater awareness of and participate in the wise management of public lands and waters.

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