

News Release

Office of Communications
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS-330
Arlington, VA 22203
Phone: 703-358-2220
Fax: 703-358-1973
<http://www.fws.gov>



July 1, 2014

Contact: Christina Meister, christina_meister@fws.gov, (703) 358-2284

Report Shows Declining Trend in Prairie Pothole Wetlands

Pressure from Agriculture, Development Threatens Globally Important Waterfowl Breeding Region

According to a new report, wetlands in the Prairie Pothole Region declined by an estimated 74,340 acres between 1997 and 2009 – an average annual net loss of 6,200 acres.

“Extreme weather patterns, rising agricultural commodity prices and oil and gas development are threatening millions of acres of prairie wetlands, putting further pressure on the most valuable breeding area for ducks in the Americas,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “This report highlights the need for continued vigilance in monitoring and protecting the Prairie Pothole Region to ensure it remains healthy for waterfowl for generations to come.”

The U.S. portion of the Prairie Pothole Region includes parts of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa. Approximately 118 million acres of land, 21 million acres of grass cover and 2.63 million wetland basins support more than 300 species of migrating and resident birds.

Termed America’s “duck factory,” this formerly glaciated landscape is the most productive area for nesting waterfowl on the continent, perhaps the world. The region also provides stopover habitat for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds and songbirds.

“These alarming losses signal the importance of private, state and federal efforts to conserve Pothole wetlands.” said Nancy Stoner, Acting Assistant Administrator for the EPA Office of Water.

Challenges to the region include an increase in conversion of wetland to deepwater habitat (from flooding) and upland land uses such as agriculture and development. In recent years, grassland and wetland losses have continued, and wetland basin numbers have declined in every state except Montana, which experienced a small wetland basin gain of less than 1 percent.

The Service is working to protect the Prairie Pothole Region through a series of actions including the [Prairies Conservation Campaign](#). This initiative combines the efforts of partners and other state and federal agencies to raise public awareness and develop incentives for landowners to conserve grassland habitat. Another critical component of conservation in the region is the funding that is raised from the sale of [Federal Duck Stamps](#).

“Unfortunately, the price of the Duck Stamp has remained flat since 1991 reducing its purchasing power to the lowest level in its 80 year history,” said Ashe. “The losses in the Prairie

Pothole Region reinforce the pressing need for changes in legislation. We look forward to working with Congress to enact an increase in the Duck Stamp price so we can set aside more key habitat in this critical waterfowl production region.”

Status and Trends of Wetlands in the Prairie Pothole Region was produced in conjunction with the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture.

You can download the full report, fact sheet, and questions and answers documents here: <http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/index.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels:



–FWS–