

# Nebraska

State Report 2010



## CONSERVATION SUMMARY

The highlight of 2009 was the significant growth in DU's efforts to secure conservation easements on the Platte River. The number of easements grew from three to seven with the four new easements protecting 1,750 acres of vital waterfowl habitat forever. Important partners were the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the North American Wetlands Conservation Council. DU restored and enhanced 544

acres of wetlands and associated habitats along the Platte and, as part of the Revolving Habitat Program, acquired a 258-acre tract of land near Scottsbluff.

More than 1,100 acres of wetlands and associated grasslands were restored or enhanced in the Rainwater Basin during 2009. Under this initiative, DU acquired three properties. Two were Revolving Habitat Program properties and the third will be gifted to the

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission as an addition to the Kirkpatrick Basin South Wildlife Management Area. DU completed a restoration project nearby Kirkpatrick Basin that is also scheduled for transfer to NGPC in 2010. Large wetland restoration projects were completed on several public lands, including Krause Waterfowl Production Area and

Bluewing WMA. The first phase of a large wetland restoration project on the Macon Lakes WPA was completed. In addition, DU Lands Manager Tim Horst enhanced almost 900 acres of wetlands through the "vegetation improvement" project, which uses a large tractor and heavy disk to cut through dense stands of cattails and reed canarygrass to stimulate growth of favored annual species that produce the abundant seed resources for waterfowl.

On the Verona Complex, DU's Rainwater Basin showpiece, two tracts were enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program and will be restored in 2010. Greenwing Legacy Projects were dedicated on the Clear Creek WMA and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge. Another Greenwing Legacy Project is planned for DU's Verona Complex.

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MALLARD HEN

## JOE GABIG MARSH WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT COMPLETED

With family and friends present, DU formally dedicated the Joe Gabig Marsh Project on May 8, 2009. The late Mr. Gabig was a waterfowl biologist for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission from 1978 to 1998. Joe served as the commission's waterfowl program manager from 1983 to 1998. He was devoted to protecting, restoring and enhancing the wetland habitats in Nebraska; especially wetlands located in the Rainwater Basin that are used by millions of waterfowl during migration.

DU completed the wetland restoration project soon after the project dedication. Crews constructed a pit that will concentrate water and help restore the natural hydrology. An existing well was retrofitted to facilitate management of wetland habitats. Approximately 50 acres of shallow marsh and 30 acres of grassland were restored. The 80-acre property will be transferred to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

as an addition to the Kirkpatrick Basin South Wildlife Management Area in York County. This project is a good example of DU's efforts to acquire "roundouts" that connect to existing public lands in the Rainwater Basin.

Project partners included the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service and the North American Wetlands Conservation Council.



# IS THE RECOVERY SUSTAINABLE?



**RESCUE THE DUCK FACTORY**

## No, not that recovery. The other recovery. The duck recovery.

A record-setting snowfall across much of the U.S. prairie, coupled with an abnormally wet summer, filled wetlands to the brim. It seemed like every pothole was home to one or more breeding duck pairs. Let the good times roll.

But will they roll on forever? Ominously, we are still poised to lose 1.66 million acres of grassland in the Prairie Pothole Region when Conservation Reserve Program contracts expire in 2012, and those potholes that attracted ducks were a real irritant to farmers attempting to plant or harvest their crops. It's ironic that the most favorable conditions for ducks can lead to a backlash against the very resources that create duck prosperity.

The great news is that we are making real progress. Since our Rescue the Duck Factory campaign began, DU members have contributed \$3.6 million to secure 68,000 acres of grasslands and wetlands. That's a remarkable achievement.

As farmers are pinched with smaller profit margins, one response is to put new land into production - often at the expense of native prairie or CRP. At DU, we are working



hard to offer alternative financial solutions, like easements and farm bill conservation programs. And thanks to a new partnership with Bayer CropScience, when land is destined to grow crops, we are well positioned to promote winter wheat as a duck-friendly alternative.

So is the recovery sustainable? The answer is "yes," as long as we have members like you!

*-Jim Ringelman, Director of Conservation Programs for Dakotas and Montana*

## PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE - DU works for waterfowl through public policy

A strong biological foundation has always been the cornerstone of Ducks Unlimited's conservation programs since the organization's founding in 1937. DU remains true to this foundation as it works to guide development of national policies that benefit waterfowl.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act and legislation involving clean water, climate and energy are among the current priorities for the DU staff in D.C. The Farm Bill, although not set for renewal until 2012, also remains on DU's radar because Farm Bill programs like Conservation Reserve

Program and Wetlands Reserve Program have significant implications for waterfowl habitats. The Clean Water Restoration Act passed the Senate Environment

and Public Works committee in 2009. This was a positive move toward reinstating protections for wetlands important to breeding ducks and small streams connected to many of the nation's drinking water resources. Progress on clean water legislation stalled in the House, but DU remains poised to work with House leadership to ensure waterfowl interests are considered in future bills.

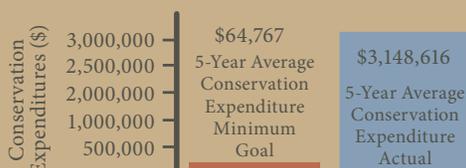
At the end of 2009, a bill that will enhance the power of NAWCA unanimously passed the House and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. It will go to the Senate floor for a vote some time in 2010. The bill would allow increased investment from Canadian resources to fulfill the requirement for private funds to match the federal contribution.

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### DU NEBRASKA GRASSROOTS & CONSERVATION 2005 - 2009



The minimum conservation goal for each state is to spend the equivalent of 7.5% of total grassroots income raised in that state. This is based on a five-year average.

**DUCKS UNLIMITED**  
The Leader in Wetlands Conservation

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