

CONSERVATION SUMMARY

Ducks Unlimited uses a revolving lands strategy, conservation easements, habitat restoration and landowner technical assistance to conserve waterfowl production habitat in South Dakota. In 2008 DU conserved 7,897 acres and spent \$1.7 million in South Dakota. Of these acres, 328 are on public lands and more than half are permanently protected from development. Working through DU's *Grasslands for Tomorrow* Initiative, DU sold six South Dakota properties including the 320-acre Ipswich Grasslands, 160-acre Meier tract and four other parcels totaling 779 acres. During 2008, DU began conservation projects in Bennett, Brookings, Butte, Deuel, Hamlin, Hyde, Kingsbury, Lake, Lawrence, Meade and Miner counties.

Conservation easements continue to be an integral part of permanently protecting significant portions of the Missouri Coteau. To date in South Dakota, DU has purchased grassland easements from 1,358 entities totaling 443,847 acres. However, there is a backlog of 513 landowners waiting to establish conservation easements on their properties, totaling 206,524 acres. The *Rescue the Duck Factory* campaign was initiated to address this easement backlog. DU member contributions to the campaign have helped DU secure conservation easements on 10,000 acres in the Dakotas. The campaign will continue into 2009 with a final goal to eliminate the backlog of landowners waiting for conservation easements.

The winter cereals program made tremendous strides in South Dakota in 2008. Regional agronomists for DU provided technical assistance on 6,017 acres to help farmers learn about and plant winter wheat on their land. This program continues to develop and will have a significant role in DU's work to provide duck nesting cover, partner with landowners and develop agricultural practices compatible with waterfowl conservation and farming.



BLUE-WINGED TEAL

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

The U. S. Department of Agriculture has announced new financial incentives for the Conservation Reserve Program focused on the Prairie Pothole Region, the heart of the nation's duck nesting habitat. The incentives should improve landowner interest and create habitat for nesting waterfowl.

USDA recently updated rental rates across the country with some counties in the PPR seeing increases of more than 40 percent. New incentives were also added to CP37, the Duck Nesting Habitat Initiative, which is a continuous sign-up practice targeted at priority landscapes for breeding waterfowl. USDA is offering an additional rental rate incentive equal to 20 percent of the annual rental rate and incentives for signing up, as well as establishing grass and wetlands.

"The combination of new incentives, increased rental rates and

falling commodity prices should generate landowner interest in CRP across the PPR," said Scott McLeod, governmental affairs representative for Ducks Unlimited in Bismarck.

In 2007, more than 770,000 acres came out of the program in the PPR of the Dakotas and Montana. An additional 365,000 acres expired in 2008.

Ducks Unlimited volunteers and partners are writing letters to the governors of North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana asking them to participate in the Sodsaver program to save native prairie. If a governor chooses to opt-in, agricultural producers in the PPR portion of the state would be ineligible to receive crop insurance and non-insured crop disaster assistance payments for a period of five years on acreage without a previous cropping history that is converted to cropland after May 22, 2008.

Rescue the Duck Factory

A Ducks Unlimited conservation campaign to perpetuate excellent waterfowl and wildlife habitat in the midst of sustainable agriculture

A HOT INVESTMENT TIP I've decided to let my duck hunting friends in on a hot investment opportunity.

Here's the deal. It's this great factory that's been in production for decades, churning out annual dividends like clockwork. Right now its risk profile is elevated, but the cost of investment is still low relative to expected returns. Are you interested?

It's called the "Duck Factory."

You look skeptical, so let me give you more details. Those ducks you enjoy every year are produced from basic raw materials: wetlands and grasslands. Those materials – especially grasslands – are disappearing. If they do, the factory output tanks. Initially, you may not notice a change in the number of ducks over your decoys. More than likely, you'll notice it first in your duck season regulations.

We've had liberal seasons for so long that many hunters don't know anything different. But take this year. If there had been 19 percent (1.47 million) fewer mallards, our season length and bag limit would be halved.

Losing most of our Conservation Reserve Program grassland, which seems inevitable, means 2 million fewer ducks in the fall flight. A quarter of those are mallards. That puts us over a third of the way to restrictive regulations, without even counting the loss of native prairie we've been experiencing.

So here's the investment strategy. Buy perpetual easements to secure the raw materials. Get them while they're cheap and available. *Rescue the Duck Factory* and enjoy the annual dividends.

It's the best deal going right now. -*Jim Ringelman, Director of Conservation Programs for Dakotas and Montana*

If you would like to make a major donation to Rescue the Duck Factory, contact Dave Afton at dafton@ducks.org



HELP FOR LANDOWNERS

Landowners in Hyde County are working to promote rangeland stewardship and enhance grassland management on their properties. Nearly 400 private landowners are participating in this conservation effort in partnership with DU, Hyde County Conservation District, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The goal of this project is to provide ranchers with the support needed

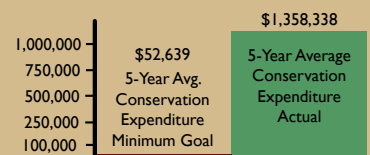


to conduct sound grassland management and keep grasslands and wetlands intact. This support is critical with today's economic climate that favors conversion of grass to cropland.

Hyde County is the focus area of this effort, however partners are assisting landowners in 21 other counties throughout east central South Dakota in the Missouri Coteau. In 2008, partners and landowners positively impacted 6,616 acres of grassland and 637 acres of wetlands. During 2009, the final year of this effort, partners expect to

improve another 7,000 acres of grassland and wetlands. Conservation of the grasslands and wetlands in Hyde and surrounding counties in the Missouri Coteau will provide habitat for many wildlife species including waterfowl, upland game birds, songbirds and deer.

DU SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSROOTS & CONSERVATION



DU's conservation expenditure goal for each state is to spend a minimum of 7.5% of total grassroots income raised in that state on a 5-year average.