ANDERSON OVERHAUL
Partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The shallow lakes and marshes on the Anderson Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) are receiving an overhaul of their water control and outlet system to bring back vegetation for waterfowl.

More on Anderson WPA, a DU Living Lakes project, on Page 6
State Chairman’s Chatter

Spring is in the air!

Besides the fall, I think spring is the best time of the year, as the ducks are returning to the area and heading to their breeding grounds it is always nice to see things coming back to life. Once again Minnesota experienced a long cold winter, but that is what makes us who we are.

Spring is also our biggest season for fundraising here in Minnesota. The reports from banquets around the state have been very positive. The RDs and volunteers have been working very hard to put on some of the best events ever and it is showing with the numbers of memberships and dollars raised. I want to thank everyone who helped out at or attended a DU event this spring.

This time of year is also very busy at the capital, in this issue of cattails you will see an introduction of Peter Eigen. Peter is our volunteer State Policy Chair and I would like to welcome him. Peter is a great asset for Minnesota DU and is working hard at the capital for the Ducks.

I hope you have had a good spring and for those who attended or volunteered at a spring banquet thank you. Have a great summer.

Spring Wetland Conditions in Minnesota

Wetland conditions in northern and central Minnesota are, in a word, fantastic. The Cattails editor took a tour of wetlands in Todd, Douglas, and Pope counties in late April and found large wetlands overflowing and small potholes filled with snow melt runoff and the spring rains. Wet meadows in Todd county had acres of sheet water, with flocks of teal and pairs of mallards using the meadows. Every basin in Douglas and Pope had water and most had pairs of ducks. Duck production should be great this year.

These potholes at the Schultz Lake Waterfowl Production Area in Douglas county are looking good, with the one on the left being flooded beyond the cattail rim.
Roseville Committee Honors Ron Tice

The Roseville Committee had their annual banquet on March 18, 2014 and decided to honor their past committee chairman, the late Ron Tice, for his work in raising the Roseville committee to new heights. This year’s sponsor print is a painting commissioned by Ron’s wife, Sheryl Pietsch, and painted by well known artist Scot Storm. At the banquet just before the auctioning of the conservation edition of the print, DU regional vice chair Bill Aldinger said a few words as a tribute to Ron. Ron was the epitome of a Ducks Unlimited volunteer. He only wanted what was best for the ducks. Those that knew Ron could not help but be inspired to work hard for the ducks. Ron was not only the Committee Chairman but also the Regional Vice Chairman and many of us thought he would eventually have become state chairman. Ron also received the Tommy Nelson Award. Sheryl and Ron are major donors to DU and are on the Coteau Ranch dedication cairn in North Dakota. The Coteau Ranch dedication is highlighted in the Summer/Fall 2013 Cattails newsletter that can be found at: http://www.ducks.org/media/Minnesota/MN%20Content/_documents/MN%20DU%20Summer-Fall%202013%20Newsletter%20.pdf

Ron was taken from us way too soon. He once said “I probably won’t be here in five years, but I just want to do what I can while I’m here.” And that’s the way he went forward, as far as he could. Many times, he and Sheryl opened their home for DU gatherings to help organize volunteers and plan for future events. He gave both financially and of his time well beyond what is the norm. What some people don’t know is that Sheryl was involved with Ducks Unlimited before Ron was, but boy did she give him the DU fever. Sheryl has been carrying on that DU work.

The Roseville committee had another very successful banquet. They are a very hard working committee that starts early in the year with weekly meetings. This year’s committee was chaired by Courtney Fields who did a great job keeping everything organize and focused on the job of raising money for the ducks.

Rest in Peace Ron

Ron (far left) pictured with Jim Hulbert, past DU President, Peter Carton, past DU Canada President and Greg Erickson, chair for the Garrison Chapter Fishing For Ducks event at the 2006 MN DU State Convention.
The Capital City Ducks Unlimited Banquet is like many other DU banquets with raffles, silent auction merchandise, and great live auction prizes. The big difference is there are a couple dozen state legislators attending, which are the attendees we home in on for the event; however, trying to get several legislators together outside of committee, constituent, lobbyist, and caucus meetings as well as general sessions is challenging and tricky. In fact, the actual banquet date is usually set only three to four weeks before the event to try to schedule it between major committee meetings and even then not all of the legislators who want to attend can make it to the event.

The banquet is put on with the help of legislators and their staff, as well as several lobbying firms. The committee chair is Kevin Thoma, who has been involved with Minnesota DU for many years. The event is held at the Kelly Inn near the state capitol complex in St. Paul. It is usually held on a weekday when the legislature is in session.

The Capitoll city event also gives us an opportunity to meet with and honor our partners. Usually, a DNR assistant commissioner attends as well as staff from the Board of Water and Soil Resources. MN DU also honors our major donors at the event to show our appreciation and thank them for their commitment.

This year, we honored Flint Hills Resources, a long-time partner, and Unimin, a new corporate partner, by presenting them with a framed sponsor print and a life sponsor plaque, respectively. Flint Hills Resources’ donation underwrites the MN DU sponsor print program. We also honored retiring LSOHC Director Bill Becker at the event.

This year, the Capital City Banquet was held in St. Paul on March 12, 2014.
A Canada native, artist Brett Longley has enjoyed great success in his relatively short career as an artist. Blessed with innate talent and a studious nature, Longley illustrated his first book cover at the young age of 19. Within 12 years, he has seen over 60 covers donning his art and has had several limited editions prints published.

His inspiration and chosen subject came to him early. Growing up with three family dogs, Longley felt the significant bond between man and his faithful companion threefold. From the first encounter to the final farewell, Longley’s art is dedicated to exploring our relationships with dogs.

As a self-taught artist, Longley has come to some deeper realizations about his passion for art. According to Brett, “Art is not something I do, it is who I am. It is not something I turn on and off, but with every breath it makes a deeper impact in my life. It is like a hunger that never goes away. To me, artists are children at play but instead of pail and shovel in a sandbox, artists play with brushes, paint and other cool stuff. The true joy of creating and an attitude of play is what I strive to show in my work.”

Brett and his family have lived in Minnesota for many years, so we now consider him a Minnesota artist.

Artwork provided courtesy of Brett Longley and Wild Wings, LLC, Lake City, Minnesota 800-445-4833 http://www.wildwings.com/

Brett is intrigued by dog behavior and captures the personality of many labs with this wanted poster.
Anderson WPA Overhaul—Partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

DU is partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to overhaul the water control and conveyance system for the Anderson Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). The Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District office asked DU to take on this project to increase the waterfowl production capacity of four water bodies on the WPA (see aerial photo map below). Anderson WPA is located in northwestern Minnesota, in Becker County.

The water bodies had became stagnant, with minimal emergent vegetation and limited submerged vegetation. Even though common carp did not appear to be present, the large potholes had many minnows that often made the water turbid as seen in the southwest basin to left. The extensive grassland on the WPA surrounding the potholes provided good nesting cover, but duck broods that hatched were easy prey for predators on the wide open water bodies.

The Fish and Wildlife Service wanted a way to draw down the potholes and enhance the wetland vegetation. To do this, required DU’s engineering know how and experience.

(continued on next page)

DU has been partnering with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Minnesota for almost 30 years.

Fritz, the MN DU Cattails retriever, looks at the new outlet channel from the WPA. Historic ditching and draining had resulted in a large gully that needed erosion control measures before the enhanced outlets could be constructed.

This is the future location of a control structure that will discharge to the conveyance pipe visible in the bottom of the hole. The pipe is buried 12 feet under the restored surface area to allow lowering of the water levels.
The project consists of erosion control on the existing drainage ways and installation of conveyance pipes to allow more extensive drawdowns to be conducted. Each of the four water bodies will have a separate water control structure to allow independent control of the water levels in each basin.

The editor visited the project on the very hot, youth opener day in September 2013. The contractor had paused in the work to let the potholes drain and dry some, so it would be easier to install the control structures. The water levels in each of the water bodies had been lowered 3 to 4 feet and bottoms were exposed as shown in the photos. Dozens of shorebirds and puddle ducks, mainly green-winged teal, were searching the shallow water for flies using the mud for egg laying. The drier exposed areas were consolidating and cracking from the man-made drought, to imitate the prairie droughts that recycle the nutrients and allow plant seeds to sprout.

Work on the water control structures continued later in fall and into winter. The structures should be finished this spring, with the project completed by the end of summer. Water levels will be likely be brought up in 2015, after the vegetation gets rooted and growing. It will be exciting to see the basins after the emergent and submergent vegetation has returned. Duck broods should find much better cover and food resources in the enhanced basins.
Ducks Unlimited has been doing projects in Minnesota since 1985. There are literally hundreds of DU projects scattered across the state. In fact, many of the water control structures on national wildlife refuges (NWRs), waterfowl production areas (WPAs) and state wildlife management areas (WMAs) were designed and built as Ducks Unlimited projects. This column is a regular feature devoted to describing some of these older DU projects.

DU’s first projects in the state were often large impoundment projects in wetland areas on public land and this was the case with the Whitewater WMA. Whitewater WMA is located in far southeastern corner of Wabasha county and extends into the northern part of Winona County. It is a large WMA, along the Whitewater River, in the bluff country with high ridges and flat river bottoms. The impoundments are located in the river bottoms near or adjacent to the river.

The impoundments at Whitewater WMA were first constructed by the DNR back in the 1950s. Over the years, the outlets and dikes deteriorated and the impoundments provided limited waterfowl habitat. When DU was first looking for projects in Minnesota and approached the DNR, they often steered DU to refurbish their impoundments on wildlife manage-

The Dorer Pools are named for Richard J. Dorer a former Commission of Conservation who was active in preserving habitat in southeast MN.
PROJECT HALL OF FAME—WHITEWATER WMA (CONTINUED)

DU refurbished four impoundments, Dorer Pool No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 and Dondlinger Pool, which is on the opposite side of the river from the Dorer Pools. New water control structures for each of the pools were also installed as seen in the construction photographs. Earth moving included 28,400 cubic yards (cy) of embankment construction required to rebuild dikes, 11,400 cy of channel excavation, and 1,280 cy of rock riprap placed at structures and along the Whitewater River bank. In all, DU rebuilt 14,750 linear feet (almost three miles) of dike, enhanced 339 wetland acres, with a total project cost of $360,000 in 1990 dollars.

Acting WMA Manager, Robert Tangen, said the pools are still very effective, with many nesting mallards, teal, and wood ducks, plus a few trumpeter swans. They are used quite a bit for duck hunting early in the season, but get burnt out a bit because of their popularity. He indicated having the nearby closed areas on the Upper Mississippi NWR and on the WMA helps keep some ducks around later in the season. The DNR has installed a wheelchair accessible duck blind on one of the dikes that DU rebuilt.

This was a huge project by anybody’s standard.

There is a wheelchair accessible duck hunting blind located on the dike of Dorer Pool No. 1 (below).

This is a recent Google Street View of the northwest portion of Dorer Pool No. 3 showing the great emergent vegetation conditions.

Construction started in the spring of 1990 and continued through the summer (photo to left). The photo below is taken in late fall after this pool had refilled.
The Minnesota DU state convention was held in Willmar this year on February 14 and 15, 2014.

US Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Steve Erickson (center) receives the “Beyond the Call” Award plaque from Josh Kavanaugh and Jon Schneider, DU Conservation Staff in Minnesota.

A surprised Ruth Hoefs receives the Jimmy Robinson Award from RD John Marks on the left and State Chair Tim Roble.

State Chair Tim Roble, and Jon Schneider, Manager-Minnesota Conservation Programs accept a Conservation Minnesota Award for DU’s wise use of Legacy Amendment funds from Jaclyn Urness, Director of Public Engagement for Conservation Minnesota.

The Win Stephens Award went to North American Art for their efforts and donations to MN DU. Debbie Murphy accepts the award from RD John Marks and State Chair Tim Roble.

The Tommy Nelson award winner was Doug Cardwell (left) with State Chair Tim Roble, RD Brad Jensen, and Southwest Regional Vice Chair Joe Schlager.
Can you make a duck call?

Greetings, I am excited to bring both my professional and personal experiences to the Minnesota Public Policy Chair position. I have spent my entire life in the field hunting waterfowl, turkey and pheasants. One of my earliest and fondest memories as a child involves lying in a harvested cornfield with my father and listening to the whistle of mallard wings overhead as dawn began to break.

As a member of Ducks Unlimited for more than 25 years, I have always possessed a great respect for the mission of DU and the holistic nature of the organization’s approach to habitat conservation. As our nation’s conservation landscape continues to change in adverse ways, Minnesota faces state and federal policies that can make all the difference in the health and well being of our wetlands. The stroke of a politician’s pen can have a huge impact on wetlands and waterfowl. As a member of Ducks Unlimited, your voice is heard by our legislators. Can you make a duck call?

If you are interested in being a part of Ducks Unlimited’s voice in public policy, please contact me at: pjeigen@gmail.com

Volunteer Spotlight—Patrick “Duck Man” Patterson

Patrick was born in Mankato and grew up duck hunting on Swan Lake. “Since I was three, my Dad brought me along on hunts. It was always fun when he let me set decoys or take aim at a few unsuspecting decoys with my BB gun.” All the previous hunts and waterfowl studying paid off when at the age of seven, he graduated from the BB gun to his Dad’s Remington 1100 12 gauge. “A lone blue-winged teal started working the decoys and Dad asked if I wanted to shoot his gun. Of course I said yes! Dad tells the story that, while he was instructing me about taking aim with a gun longer than I was tall, I shot before he was ready. I was going out one side of the boat from the recoil while the gun was going out the other. Luckily, Dad caught me and the gun. Before he could ask if I was alright, I was yelling, ‘Did I get ‘em Dad?!?’”

Experiences and memories like these are what fuel Patrick’s passions – conservation of wetlands and native prairies and waterfowl hunting. With his family hunting experiences, along with being a Ducks Unlimited member over the years, Patrick became a DU volunteer five years ago. “Volunteering with DU is rich and rewarding experience because I know the work we are doing now will fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever. Most of my close friends were met through my DU experiences and I am grateful that I get to give back to an organization that has given so much to my family and me.”

Patrick has held a variety of volunteer positions with DU including area chair for two chapters, zone chair, and MN Gun Calendar Southeast Region representative. Patrick currently resides in Burnsville with his wife, Emily, and his black lab hunting buddy, Quinn.

And for the record, Patrick did harvest that teal on that early autumn day and he has the cherished pictures to prove it!
Ducks Unlimited is the world’s largest non-profit organization dedicated to conserving North America’s continually disappearing waterfowl habitats. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 13 million acres, thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent. Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.

Ducks Unlimited’s name and logo can be found in many venues, but this might be a first: on a pinewood derby car. Thirteen-year old Thomas Viktora created this pinewood derby car as a project for his Cadet Club. Tom is a DU Greenwing member from the little town of Oakland, Minnesota, yes, Oakland, MN, a small town northwest of Albert Lea.