NORTHEAST POTHOLES PROGRAM RECEIVES FIRST $1,000,000 NAWCA GRANT

For more than a decade, the Northeast Potholes Program has been one of Ducks Unlimited’s (DU) most successful conservation programs in Indiana. Prospects for restoring critical waterfowl breeding habitat increased significantly in 2014 when DU received its first $1million North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant to continue this work. In partnership with many other conservation entities, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, ACRES Inc., Indiana Natural Resources Foundation, Bicentennial Nature Trust, and many private companies and individuals, this new “Northeast Morainal Wetlands” NAWCA grant will acquire, restore, and enhance more than 1,600 acres of wetlands and uplands throughout Northeast Indiana. Over the next three to four years, projects will be conducted at Pigeon River Fish and Wildlife Area, Pokagon and Potato Creek State Parks, Cedar Swamp Wetland Conservation Area, Covell Nature Preserve, and on the many private lands which have become the hallmark of the Northeast Potholes Program’s success.

$1,000,000 NAWCA AWARDED FOR PATOKA RIVER NWR EXPANSION

In April 2014, Ducks Unlimited was awarded a $1 million dollar NAWCA grant to acquire and permanently protect more than 800 acres of wetlands for inclusion into the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (FWS) Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). This announcement follows the prior completion of more than 1,700 acres of DU-assisted acquisitions since 2012 at Patoka River NWR. DU and FWS partnered with many other conservation entities, including Duke Energy, Peabody Energy, Indiana Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Land and Resource Management, Izaak Walton League, Evansville Audubon, and Friends of Patoka River NWR, to receive this NAWCA grant and to acquire these new lands. The permanent protection of these properties helps ensure their availability and management for migrating and wintering waterfowl. As migration and weather patterns change, a slow trend of waterfowl wintering further and further north requires that DU conserve not only migration but important wintering habitat in southern Indiana too. As DU moves forward with the Big Rivers Initiative, the conservation of these large landscape-level wetland habitat complexes, as made possible by this NAWCA grant, become even more crucial to DU’s success. To date, the FWS and DU have acquired and permanently protected more than 4,000 acres of wetland and upland habitat for inclusion into Patoka River NWR, and have restored an additional 1,200 acres of wetland and upland habitat.
GOOSE POND FWA RESTORATIONS CONTINUE

Beginning in the spring of 2015, Ducks Unlimited and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) will continue their long-standing and highly successful partnership at Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area. Even though this 8,000-acre land acquisition and waterfowl conservation project has proven to be a success, additional opportunities to improve waterfowl habitat continue to be identified. Following the successful and ecologically diverse “Field B” restoration project completed in 2011, DU and the IDNR will be partnering to restore the “Field E” site. Immediately adjacent to Field B, the Field E site will be restored to shallow wetlands with a short-grass prairie buffer.

COLEMAN PROPERTY PERMANENTLY PROTECTED

Earlier this year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), The Conservation Fund (TCF), the Friends of Patoka River NWR and WMA (Friends), the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, Wetlands America Trust (WAT), and Ducks Unlimited completed the acquisition of the 53.8-acre Coleman Farms property in Pike County, southwestern Indiana. The Coleman Farms property was identified for acquisition by DU and FWS for inclusion into Patoka River NWR, utilized funding from the “Patoka River NWR Habitat Expansion” standard NAWCA $1 million grant secured by DU earlier this year. Through its partnership agreement with Duke Energy, DU will restore 20 acres of agricultural fields to bottomland hardwood forest, provide Duke Energy with a carbon easement, and then revolve this land into Patoka River NWR ownership at a future date.

WABASHIKI FWA NEARS COMPLETION

Over the last five years and with funding assistance provided by a $1 million NAWCA grant, Ducks Unlimited has aided the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) with acquiring and permanently protecting wetlands along the Wabash River for the creation of Wabashiki Fish and Wildlife Area (FWA). Following the acquisition of approximately 1,000 acres in early 2015, a total of more than 3,600 acres will be acquired and permanently protected as part of this NAWCA grant. The properties acquired by IDNR will be restored to bottomland hardwood forest, scrub-shrub thickets, and emergent marsh. The long-term protection of these properties also helps DU in meeting its mission of wetlands and waterfowl conservation.

The large block of mixed wetlands provided by Wabashiki FWA will provide important migration and breeding habitat for the thousands upon thousands of waterfowl that migrate through the Wabash River corridor. To address landscape-scale waterfowl habitat needs state-wide, Ducks Unlimited is in discussions with the FWS about upgrading many of the water control structures at Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The existing infrastructure has met its life expectancy and the FWS can no longer manage nearly 2,000 acres of wetlands for the best waterfowl habitat. DU will be investigating options to assist the FWS with continuing to improve the waterfowl habitat available at Muscatatuck NWR.

MUSCATATUCK NWR ENHANCEMENTS IN PLANNING

To address landscape-scale waterfowl habitat needs state-wide, Ducks Unlimited is in discussions with the FWS about upgrading many of the water control structures at Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The existing infrastructure has met its life expectancy and the FWS can no longer manage nearly 2,000 acres of wetlands for the best waterfowl habitat. DU will be investigating options to assist the FWS with continuing to improve the waterfowl habitat available at Muscatatuck NWR.

DEEP RIVER ENTERS FINAL PHASE OF RESTORATION

After nearly a decade of planning and restoration activities, Ducks Unlimited (DU) and Lake County Parks are nearing the completion of the approximately 160-acre Beaver Dam Wetland Conservation Area restoration project. Located near the headwaters of the Deep River, this wetland and oak-savannah restoration project will enter its final phase of construction in 2015. The completion of this project will provide important breeding and migration habitat for numerous species of waterfowl and other wildlife.

NAWCA RESTORATIONS COMPLETED AT PATOKA RIVER NWR

Ducks Unlimited, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge and Multi-Resources Management, Inc., recently completed a small NAWCA grant to complete wetland restoration projects throughout Patoka River NWR. These restoration efforts include the reforestation of agricultural fields to bottomland hardwoods, creation of seasonal, shallow-water wetlands, and planting adjacent upland hillsides. As part of this small grant, more than 87 acres of wetlands and uplands were restored on key parcels throughout Patoka River NWR, many of which DU previously helped the FWS acquire, and will provide breeding, migration and wintering habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife, such as bobwhite quail and turkeys, water quality improvements, and a diversity of wetland ecosystems.
THE BIG RIVERS INITIATIVE

RESTORING THE GRAND PASSAGES OF WATERFOWL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

For more than 75 years, Ducks Unlimited has replaced what was lost — critical wetlands that provide the habitat for North American waterfowl. Generations of conservationists rallied around DU’s vision of “wetlands sufficient to fill skies today, tomorrow and forever. As DU looks to the next 25 years of wetlands conservation, we also look for better ways to fund our conservation model. DU’s ability to leverage supporter dollars many times over before returning them to the landscape and our commitment to being sound stewards of your investment will continue to grow as we find new ways to generate support for the ducks. DU’s Big Rivers Initiative will pave the way for restoring the grand passages for waterfowl in Indiana. Picking up where our successful Indiana PRIDE program left off, the Big Rivers Initiative uses a strategic allocation of your conservation support to restore, enhance and protect wetlands across the landscape, looking at conservation opportunities through the lens of the birds themselves. Your support of the Big Rivers Initiative through your Major Sponsor pledge or gift will enable us to continue our work for future generations of conservationists to enjoy. To learn more about DU’s Major Sponsor program and how your investment will support Big Rivers, contact DU’s Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office (contact information below).

DU LICENSE PLATE SUPPORTS INDIANA CONSERVATION

Unveiled in 2012, the Indiana Ducks Unlimited license plate is one of the easiest ways for each and every DU member to make a personal contribution to Indiana habitat conservation. Available from the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) for cars, trucks, motorcycles, and RVs, this specialty plate features the DU logo and $25 from the purchase of each plate is contributed by the State of Indiana back to DU for conservation work in the state. To date, DU volunteers, members, and supporters purchased approximately 3,093 Indiana DU license plates. That means in three years, DU supporters secured an additional $77,325 for Indiana conservation simply by purchasing a new license plate or renewing their old one. DU conservation staff has already begun to use these funds to support Indiana conservation projects like the Northeast Potholes Program, Wabash River Habitat Protection, Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area, Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, and Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge projects. With continued support from DU supporters, we can secure even more conservation funds for Indiana simply by changing your license plate.

For more information about purchasing an Indiana DU license plate, visit the BMV website at www.in.gov/bmv/3030.htm or contact your DU Regional Directors: Dave Neal dneal@ducks.org (260-223-6044) and Joe Borders jboards@ducks.org (765-724-4544).

THE GREAT LAKES INITIATIVE

Cool water, coastal wetlands and an appreciation for the outdoors. Ducks Unlimited’s Great Lakes Initiative encompasses all of these aspects of waterfowl conservation for DU members living in Michigan and portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Ontario. The purpose of the Great Lakes Initiative is to conserve the diversity of pothole, shrub-scrub and forested wetlands, shallow lakes, coastal estuaries and rivers found in this region and that provide critical habitat for breeding, migrating and wintering waterfowl. We need your help to keep the Great Lakes productive for waterfowl and other wildlife by supporting DU projects that seek to reduce nutrient and pollutant run-off into valuable wetlands, lakes, streams and rivers; combat the progression of invasive species that threaten our remaining habitats, and respond to declining lake levels, climate change or other unforeseen challenges that might arise. The goal of Great Lakes Initiative is to maximize benefits for continental waterfowl by restoring, enhancing, and protecting wetland complexes that include large marshes and shallow lakes on public and private lands throughout the region. These wetland habitats provide critical feeding and resting areas that waterfowl require during migration, and also provide habitat for a number of waterfowl species that breed in the region. This initiative recognizes that public policy impacts conservation as surely as weather, and that DU must be equally prepared to weigh in on legislative issues at the regional and national level. To learn more about DU’s Major Sponsor program and how your investment will support Great Lakes, contact DU’s Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office (contact information below).