



## **U.S. Habitat Conservation Through Land Ownership and Conservation Easements**

### ***The Bottom Line:***

“Ducks Unlimited owns limited amounts of land in key areas to address specific waterfowl conservation needs.”

### ***Ducks Unlimited and Land Ownership:***

- Most Ducks Unlimited conservation projects occur on land owned by others, including public lands administered by state and federal agencies and private lands.
- In 2007, DU owned approximately 20,000 acres in the U.S., mostly in South Dakota.
- The total acres and location of the land that DU owns changes each year because the land is typically sold or gifted to an agency or sold to a conservation buyer once the waterfowl habitat has been restored and protected by easement.
- Most of the land that DU owns is open to the public for walk-in hunting by permission through our Great Plains Regional Office (call 701-355-3500 for more information). DU does not reserve special hunting or other privileges for anyone.
- DU typically purchases, from willing sellers, properties that have the potential to be quality nesting habitat but are in need of restoration, or that provide excellent habitat but are threatened by development or conversion.
- DU also accepts donated land that provides important waterfowl conservation benefits or could be sold to produce income.
- DU actively manages land while it is under ownership. That management may include manipulating water levels, restoring wetlands, restoring trees, grass or other wildlife habitat, and agricultural management. DU does not artificially feed waterfowl or undertake other practices to hold large concentrations of waterfowl.
- DU’s sister organization, Ducks Unlimited Canada, owns approximately 300,000 acres of land, mostly in the vital breeding grounds of the prairie provinces.

(over)

### ***Ducks Unlimited and Conservation Easements:***

- Ducks Unlimited's most active land protection tool encourages landowners to donate or sell conservation easements to protect the conservation values of land in perpetuity.
- A conservation easement is a perpetual legal agreement that a property owner makes to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on the property.
- Conservation easements allow landowners to protect key natural habitats while continuing to use the land for many traditional economic or recreational uses.
- As of 2007, DU has protected over 350 properties via conservation easement, containing approximately 325,000 acres of waterfowl habitat.
- Most DU conservation easements are located in the Lowcountry of South Carolina and in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley.
- The vast majority of DU's conservation easements are donated. In special cases only, DU will purchase a conservation easement.
- In the case of donated easements, landowners can claim a benefit on their annual tax return of the difference in value of the land before and after the easement as the restrictions on future use decrease the value of the land and are a donation to DU as a not-for-profit organization.
- Landowners who donate or sell easements to DU customarily pay for the associated on-going costs (such as annual monitoring) by donating an endowment to DU.