**SPONSOR REPORT**

Oklahoma's Campaign Committee worked to secure five upgrades and two new Feather Society commitments in 2015. Oklahoma sponsors understand that giving to Ducks Unlimited is the soundest investment they can make for the future of wetlands, waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

Life Sponsor and incoming Oklahoma State Chairman Bill Hoffman is one of those dedicated volunteers. An Air Force brat born in Fort Benning, Georgia, Bill was always an avid duck hunter. During his time in Arkansas his boss took him to his first Ducks Unlimited event in 1988. "I've been involved with DU ever since," Bill said.

Though he moved around early in life, more than 50 years ago Bill settled in Poteau, Oklahoma, and that is where he considers home. Bill's investment of time and money into Ducks Unlimited is driven by his love of duck hunting and the knowledge that DU is leaving the world a better place. "Somebody has to take care of the resource, and I feel DU does that," Bill said.

Bill also loves motorcycles, and can find him and his wife, Joanna, taking day trips around the state on their Harley Davidson Ultra. Once or twice a year, he gets together with friends and makes a cross-country ride. Much like duck hunting, motorcycle riding puts you in the elements and connects you to the world around you.

Bill finds the people of Ducks Unlimited to be one of its greatest attributes. "I've been to numerous state and national conventions and met people from all walks of life. There's an amazing comradery between all these different people because of the ducks and our desire to see future generations like my grandson enjoying them," Bill said. "Knowing I'm a part of that stewardship gives me great pride."

**CONSERVATION UPDATE**

Oklahoma is a key wintering and migration area for waterfowl in North America. Ducks Unlimited's conservation priorities in Oklahoma are the protection, restoration and enhancement of moist-soil marshes and associated habitats, particularly publicly managed wetland complexes. DU has a strong partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, together improving waterfowl resources on several wildlife management areas, including recent work at Waurika WMA. DU has partnered with ODWC to hire a consultant to continue the DU/ODWC partnership, help develop on-the-ground project ideas, and identify funding opportunities and strategies to help deliver conservation projects. Wetlands in Oklahoma provide critical stopover and refueling habitats for waterfowl in the Central Flyway, especially during spring migration. Since DU began conservation work in Oklahoma, nearly 38,000 acres of important wetland habitat have been conserved. These efforts benefit waterfowl, other wildlife and the people of Oklahoma.
**DRUMMOND FLATS EXPANSION**

On Feb 27, 2015 Alan Stacey, representing DU/Wetlands America Trust, was the successful bidder at a public auction for a 22-acre parcel at Drummond Flats in northwest Oklahoma. Drummond Flats Wildlife Management Area covers 4,653 acres in western Garfield County in north central Oklahoma. It is a historic overflow basin at the confluence of Turkey Creek, Elm Creek and Salt Creek, and is predominately wetland habitat with some surrounding upland habitat. This parcel was the only inholding at the Drummond Flats WMA, and ODWC requested DU’s assistance in securing it. The parcel officially went to ODWC at the end of August, expanding the WMA and eliminating the potential for habitat disturbances inside this important waterfowl area.

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

For nearly 20 years, Ducks Unlimited has worked with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) to secure the future of waterfowl habitat and Oklahoma’s hunting heritage. DU has helped to acquire approximately 13,000 acres of historic wetland habitat for ODWC management, as well as restore or enhance over 8,000 wetland acres on more than 10 ODWC wildlife management areas. Assistance has included wetland planning, engineering, surveying, inspection, grant writing, generation of project partners and direct financial support.

Further solidifying that partnership, DU hired an Oklahoma Wetland Conservation Coordinator in July. This consultant will push forward wetland conservation efforts in Oklahoma. Alan Stacey, who retired from ODWC in 2014, will fill this position. His initial focus will be on pushing forward the Neosho Bottoms WMA establishment in northeast Oklahoma and furthering the restoration of Drummond Flats WMA in northwest Oklahoma.

**VOLUNTEER REPORT**

Volunteers are the heartbeat of Ducks Unlimited, and Oklahoma has some of the best. Oklahoma boasts more than 8,200 members, including more than 660 volunteers who hosted 59 events in 2015, raising nearly $667,000 to support DU’s conservation mission. Those dollars enable DU to complete extensive conservation work in Oklahoma and on the breeding grounds that produce Oklahoma’s waterfowl.

Joe Ready of Chandler is one of those dedicated volunteers. “I didn’t know much of anything about Ducks Unlimited 15 or so years ago,” Joe said. That’s when he was “voluntold” by his new neighbor Bill Townsend and other DU volunteers. He went to his first DU event in Oklahoma City, and the wheels immediately started turning for him. “I wanted to put on my first event ever with the goal of making it engaging and fun,” Joe said. More than focusing on the money raised, Joe focuses on the enjoyment of attendees. That approach certainly works in Chandler, where Joe and a handful of dedicated volunteers like Garrett Jackson, Bud Berry and Steve Gibson managed to have the highest net/net event in Oklahoma DU history last year. “No one does this alone,” Joe said. “I may be the face of Chandler DU, but the other folks that make up our small but well-oiled committee are the ones that do the work so I can be on the stage.” That group includes his wife, Robyn, who Joe describes as the backbone to his DU success. “She is the first person they see at the event. Everyone signs in and signs out through Robyn,” Joe said.

“Joe and the committee do a great job of filling every seat in the house,” said Regional Director Nathan Johnson. “Joe is a rock star during the event. He makes sure it is exciting and that everyone is having a great time.”

As important as raising money for the ducks is to Joe, managing his own habitat for their benefit is equally important. He fully grasps the critical importance of wetland habitat in migration areas like Oklahoma. “If I could choose my conservation legacy, it would be to let migrating ducks have a place to land from now on. Forever,” he said.

**The time to Rescue Our Wetlands is right now!**

Band together with us today.

To find out more ways you can help Rescue Our Wetlands through our regional initiatives, visit www.ducks.org/rescue or contact Ducks Unlimited at 601-956-1936

**SOUTHERN REGION**

Oklahoma 2016 Report