



## Wetlands America Trust, Inc.

President  
John W. Childs

Chief Operating Officer  
Dan Thiel

Secretary/Treasurer  
Robert S. (Bob) Hester Jr.

*Dear WAT Trustees,*

I am pleased to reach out to you in what will become the new medium for keeping you up-to-date on DU's ongoing conservation, fundraising, policy and development efforts. This is the first of a new, bi-monthly letter you'll receive from me. In each letter you will receive important and timely updates on WAT's very efforts, along with any other information we feel is important to your position as a DU leader and member of the Wetlands America Trust Board.

Your support of WAT is the reason we have been able to accomplish great things and we truly appreciate your time, philanthropy and commitment. We hope this letter will become one of your primary sources for all things related to DU's operations delivered in an efficient and succinct manner. As always, should you have questions and suggestions please contact me.

### Conservation

Ducks Unlimited continues to make steady progress on our long-term mission and strategic goal of "landscapes capable of supporting North American waterfowl populations." At the close of CY12, DU exceeded 13 million acres conserved in North America. This does not include our work in the Boreal Forest. This is a huge milestone for everyone involved with the organization, and we thank WAT for all you have invested to help us reach this groundbreaking achievement. This milestone was celebrated at the DU Winter Board meeting and John Childs was able to participate.

### More Conservation Updates

- During the 2012 breeding survey period we saw an all-time record – at least since surveys began in the mid-1950s – in the number of breeding ducks.
- Next year's numbers will depend significantly on the weather patterns over the upcoming six to seven months. Recent snow storms in the Prairies are encouraging and the condition of the migratory habitat as the birds move back to the nesting grounds.
- Ducks Unlimited and our waterfowl conservation partners must continue with the progress that led to 13 million acres conserved and expand that effort wherever possible. DU's policy efforts and our continued on-the-ground delivery for waterfowl habitat conservation will never be more important than in the years ahead.

## Policy

Despite broad endorsements and the desperate need for conservation programs, 2013 is already emerging as a very challenging year in terms of legislative support of conservation. Our Government Affairs Office tells us we can expect Congress to impose stricter fiscal discipline on federal spending as legislators continue to take on the extended fiscal cliff and debt ceiling debates. In the face of these upcoming budgetary decisions, we must be diligent in showing Congress the importance and value of conservation to sportsmen and the general public. We ask that you please keep these issues in mind when talking to legislative members or their staffs.

### More Policy Updates:

- Although authorization for North American Wetlands Conservation Act lapsed in September, we were able to secure appropriations in the six-month continuing resolution at close to FY12 funding levels.
- The last-minute fiscal cliff agreement included a nine-month extension of the Farm Bill that allows continued enrollment in the Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program and Grasslands Reserve Program under existing caps. However, caps could continue to be affected by any fiscal cliff deals in the next few months.
- We continue to strive for a price increase of the Federal Duck Stamp. The price of land has gone up with inflation, but the steady price of the stamp has weakened the purchase power of our conservation dollars.

## Philanthropy

The generosity of our Major Sponsors was evident at the end of the calendar year as we received more than \$7 million in cash gifts and pledge payments, bringing our total cash gifts at the halfway mark of the fiscal year to \$19.8 million toward a goal of \$22 million. In addition, we received nearly \$6 million in new commitments from Major Sponsors, bringing the total to \$23 million towards a goal of \$26 million.

## Miscellany

Most recently, DU signed a Stewardship Partnership with the USA Rice Federation. The partnership will address rice production, waterfowl and water conservation projects, programs and policies that are mutually beneficial to both organizations and to society as a whole. As we all know, flooded rice fields provide excellent food, cover and resting areas for migrating waterfowl. The partnership will address the issues that face both rice producers and waterfowl conservation. It's a win all the way around for hunters, rice producers, citizens and waterfowl alike. It is important to recognize George Dunklin and Al Montna whose efforts have made this partnership a reality.

## Upcoming Events

- Oran Richard (former WAT Trustee) Tribute, Lafayette, La.; March 15
- Capitol Hill Dinner & Canadian Embassy reception, Washington, D.C.; April 15-16
- 76th Annual Ducks Unlimited National Convention, Portland, Ore.; May 22-26
- Wetlands America Trust Spring meeting, Boreal Forest (Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Yellow Knife); June 22-25
- Wetlands America Trust Winter meeting, Othella, WA; Eagle Lake Ranch; December 11-13

In closing, I'd like to again thank you for your commitment to make DU the nation's premier conservation organization and specifically for your service to the WAT board.

*Sincerely,*

Dan Thiel

