Dear WAT Trustees,

I hope you are enjoying your spring so far – at least those of you who live in areas where spring has begun! My 16-year-old son, Daniel, has been thoroughly enjoying this magical time of year and hunting turkeys every chance he gets. I am pleased to report he shot his first turkey this season!

The third WAT letter of 2013 is a special one simply because it arrives at a time when final preparations are being made for Ducks Unlimited’s 76th annual National Convention in Portland, Oregon. I’m told by our Communications staff that the agenda, scripts and presentations are coming together nicely. For those who will be attending, I look forward to spending time with you in the City of Roses. It will be a special time and is the perfect opportunity to highlight the good conservation work your philanthropy and support make possible.

Philanthropy

Speaking of philanthropy and support, I am pleased to provide an update on our endowment challenge. As you know, at the 75th Annual Ducks Unlimited National Convention last year, three of your fellow Wetlands America Trust board members committed $75 million toward the permanent endowment. Their philanthropic leadership also presented us with a tremendous challenge: Build DU’s permanent endowment by matching their gift with an additional $75 million. With the current endowment close to $35 million, and good investment management, the endowment will ultimately provide DU with $200 million. Throwing off $10 million per year (5 percent of principal) this will provide DU the permanent financial foundation to pursue its conservation mission even more aggressively, without having to worry about holding back conservation dollars for a “rainy day.”

Gifts to the endowment – most commonly made in the form of estate bequests – will go a long way to help maintain and expand DU’s exemplary record of habitat conservation. Only the income, typically limited to 5 percent of principal, may be spent annually. Consequently more funding will be directed to on-the-ground conservation.

We’re off to a great start thanks to the leadership of John Childs, Jim Kennedy, Dave Grohne, and Deke Welles, chairman of our Development Committee, and the hard work of Jon Rich and the DU Gift Planning staff.

In the year since this challenge was announced, we have received almost $15 million in documented endowment gifts. Trustees like Deke, Orrin Ingram and John Tomke have all
designated their gifts to help accomplish this ambitious challenge.

We still need your philanthropic support if we are to meet the challenge and maintain the tremendous conservation work DU has accomplished in the past 75 years. If you would like to discuss an estate gift to benefit DU, please call Jon at (901) 758-3763. Jon has led the Gift Planning program for nearly 13 years and has the expertise to assist you and your advisors in structuring the appropriate estate gift should you wish to support the WAT endowment challenge.

Public Policy
Several Trustees accepted the invitation to join Members of Congress, their staffs and DU leaders at the Capitol Hill Dinner and Canadian Embassy reception in April. A special thanks to David McLean for hosting the event at the Canadian Embassy which was attended by both the Secretary of Agriculture and the recently confirmed Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell. Both events were a great success and will lead to more opportunities for us to initiate and influence policy that will have a lasting effect on our natural resources.

Boreal WAT Meeting
We want to again invite you to make plans to attend the WAT spring meeting in the Boreal Forest. The Boreal is one of the most unspoiled forest and wetland ecosystems remaining on earth and covers more than 1.5 billion acres. Our excursions in the region will offer unique adventures, and we will have occasion to survey the breeding habitats of several species of waterfowl.

Please call Pattie Kempka at (901) 758-3844 or send her an email at pkempka@ducks.org to share your travel plans. Several trustees have indicated they plan to attend, but we need your travel logistics. For those who haven't made plans, please schedule arrivals in Fort McMurray in time for dinner on June 23. Departures can begin on June 26. Should you have interest in pursuing truly world-class fishing following the meeting, we have excellent opportunities available. Details are contained in the separate letter.

Upcoming Events
- 76th Annual Ducks Unlimited National Convention, Portland, Oregon.; May 22-26
- Wetlands America Trust spring meeting, Boreal Forest (Fort McMurray and Yellowknife); June 23-26
- Wetlands America Trust winter meeting, Othello, Washington; Eagle Lake Ranch; December 11-13, generously hosted by Mark Pine.

In closing, thank you again for your commitment to make DU the nation’s premier conservation organization and for your service on the WAT Board.

For the Ducks,

Dan Thiel