



## Wetlands America Trust, Inc.

President

John W. Childs

Vice President

Doug Oberhelman

Chief Operating Officer

Dan Thiel

Secretary/Treasurer

Robert S. (Bob) Hester Jr.

Dear WAT Trustees,

Yet again we find ourselves at that pivotal time of year: Summer weather persists, but fall is just around the corner. School has started in most places, and we're counting down the days and getting our gear together for those dove and early teal seasons.

### Executive Committee Changes

As Doug Oberhelman's letter of August 20 stated, John Childs resigned his position as president of WAT. John's philanthropic support and leadership commitment over the past six years are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to continuing our relationship with him.

Doug has graciously agreed to take on the responsibilities of president until a new person is elected to fill the position. That election will take place at our December board meeting. I'll have more details about that meeting in an upcoming letter. In the meantime, Doug asked that I pass along a message to our Trustees:

*I have the greatest respect for John and appreciate all he did to lead WAT. While I regret his decision, I have every confidence our organization will continue to move forward. We have a strong core of partners within the DU organization who are dedicated to our mission and will help ensure our success.*

*I also know I can count on your support. I appreciate the opportunity to fulfill the presidential responsibilities – albeit for a short time – and look forward to working more closely with the DU staff and WAT Trustees. I want to acknowledge and thank members of the WAT Executive Committee for ensuring our continued success during this period of transition.*

*Please note that we have changed the location and dates for the winter WAT meeting. At my request, we will meet Dec. 18-20 in Stuttgart at Five Oaks Lodge. Should you have any questions and/or counsel for me, please feel free to contact me.*

### National Leadership Conference

Since my last letter to you, there have been some major happenings, not least of which was our National Leadership Conference in Memphis, Tennessee. We had a tremendous turnout for the event with more than 300 WAT Trustees, DU staff, board members and national and state leaders from across the nation.

One of the highlights of the event was our guest speaker – former governor and syndicated political analyst Mike Huckabee. He spoke to the group for no less than 30 minutes and motivated our volunteers to help lead DU through the next campaign. A special thanks to Trustee and DU President George Dunklin for facilitating Mr. Huckabee's attendance and to Trustee Paul Bonderson for use of his aircraft to transport Mike from the DU event to New York City in time for his TV show.



*George Dunklin*

During the regional breakout sessions at the conference, DU staff updated the volunteer leadership on the new fundraising initiatives and how they will fit in with our next campaign. All signs were positive from the volunteers, and they seemed to have a firm grasp of how these new initiatives will further DU's mission for years to come.

To close out the event, we held a DU night at the local Triple A ballpark where George Dunklin had the honor of throwing out the first pitch before the game. And yes – for those of you who are wondering – it was a strike, straight down the middle!

### **Policy**

Although all politicians on the Hill were technically on recess during a majority of the last month, that didn't stop the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee from acting in a far-fetched way to balance an upside-down budget. This is the first time the subcommittee has zeroed out funding for programs such as the NAWCA, LWCF, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and state wildlife grants – essentially eliminating the programs. Total federal investments in natural resources and outdoor recreation are equivalent to less than 1 percent of the federal budget; however, this federal funding accounts for 60 percent of the direct investments in conservation in the United States.

Given that during its lifespan, NAWCA has translated more than \$1 billion in federal funds into nearly \$3.5 billion in non-federal additional economic activity, it's easy to see why removing this funding cannot be allowed to stand. These expenditures have created, on average, nearly 7,500 new jobs (construction workers, biologists, engineers, etc.) annually in the United States, generating more than \$200 million in worker earnings each year.

DU CEO and WAT Trustee Dale Hall was one of a select few who were invited to sit with Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to discuss this development. Dale has assured us that the Secretary is doing all she can to ensure conservation funding is added back into the budget.

We ask that you please contact your local representatives and other friends in Washington to ensure this measure never makes it out of subcommittee. The livelihood of thousands of employees and wildlife species – and the future of conservation in general – lies in the hands of people who don't understand how vital this funding is.

### **Fundraising**

The Fiscal Year 2013 year-end numbers are in, and Team DU's achievements over the last year are outstanding. We raised more than \$51 million through grassroots events. Event income grew by \$8 million and our volunteer ranks increased by 12 percent. More than 412,000 people attended our events nationwide. Across the board, we compiled the highest event fundraising totals in more than a decade. We capitalized on our 75th anniversary in the first half of the year, and that propelled us into the second half with even greater growth.

Regarding major gifts, so far we have secured \$18 million to meet the endowment challenge that you as Trustees set in motion last year with the \$75 million for 75 challenge, bringing the total to \$93 million in commitments. This year, our overall estate planning goal is to achieve \$17.5 million in new commitments.

In the membership category, DU surpassed its membership goal for the second year in a row. We finished FY12 with 611,000 members, and in FY13, we experienced more than 5 percent growth to reach a total of 645,000 members. Event attendance was up almost 30,000, too.

As you all know, our next campaign is gearing up, and to fulfill some goals, we have hired a new stewardship director. Some of you may know Phil Poux as a former director of development for the mid-Atlantic region, but now he's located at national headquarters and has filled the new stewardship position. We look forward to great things from Phil to help us surpass our goals in this current campaign.

## DU and NASCAR

It's not often that you get the chance to place your company's name and logo on a NASCAR Sprint Cup Series car, but that's just what happened recently. Thanks to a generous partnership with Johnny Morris, founder of Bass Pro Shops, the DU logo could be seen at speeds of more than 195 mph at the Coca Cola 400 held at Daytona International Speedway in early July. The race is one of the largest night races of the year, and Johnny was kind enough to include DU. Driver of the car, Tony Stewart, finished second after a restart with 10 laps left in the race.



*DU logo on the Daytona International Speedway*

## Upcoming Events

- *Winter 2013 WAT Board Meeting, Stuttgart, Ark. Dec. 18-20 (Please note date and location change.)*
- *Spring 2014 WAT Board Meeting, Grand Island/Omaha, Neb., March 5-7*

In closing, I'd like to wish you all great early season hunting, and I thank you for all you do for both DU and WAT.

For the ducks,

Dan Thiel