



NEWS RELEASE

GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL OFFICE

2525 River Road, Bismarck, ND 58503
701.355.3500 • www.ducks.org

Partnerships get the work done for ducks in Minnesota Funding sources combined to improve five more west-central shallow lakes

WILLMAR, Minn., Nov. 11, 2008 – Many funding sources make light work. Ducks Unlimited is improving five more key shallow lakes in west-central Minnesota because local, state and federal partners joined forces to financially support these wetland projects.

“These complex wetland projects were implemented quickly this year due to the willingness of partners to provide the cost-share funding necessary for DU to tackle multiple projects at the same time,” said Jon Schneider, manager of Minnesota conservation programs for DU, based in Alexandria. “Without both state and federal funding partners and the support of local groups, only a few projects would be possible in a given year.”

Ducks Unlimited is adding water control structures and fish barriers to five large wetland basins on federal Waterfowl Production Areas near Willmar, Morris, and Fergus Falls. The new structures will improve the ability of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to minimize fish and periodically manage water levels to rejuvenate wetland habitat in these basins for waterfowl and other wildlife. The clean, clear water resulting from temporary draw-downs will help produce plants and invertebrates that attract and feed ducks and other waterfowl.

The five projects include the 124-acre Olson Lake WPA in Kandiyohi County, the 162-acre Sherstad Slough WPA in Stevens County, the 102-acre Hanson WPA in Grant County, and two large wetland basins totaling 122 acres on Bah Lakes WPA in Grant County. Collectively, these five basins will provide over 500 acres of improved duck migration habitat in future years.

Over \$500,000 in funding needed for these important wetland improvement projects was made possible through aggressive and innovative cost-share partnerships forged among DU and local, state, and federal organizations that all have a common mission of improving Minnesota’s water resources. DU received state funding from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and Department of Natural Resources, federal funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and USFWS’s Challenge Cost Share program to engineer and construct all six west-central Minnesota projects this fall.

DU’s *Living Lakes* Initiative aims to improve 400 shallow lakes in Minnesota and Iowa. This cooperative work between DU and Minnesota DNR will also help fulfill the shallow lake goals of DNR’s *Duck Recovery Plan*, which calls for the improvement of 1,800 shallow lakes across Minnesota. It will also help meet the wetland habitat objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan that calls for improved brood-rearing and migration habitat.

Shallow lakes are large wetland basins 50 acres or larger in size but less than 15 feet deep. When healthy, these wetlands often contain abundant aquatic plants and invertebrates sought by ducks (and duck hunters). Unfortunately, many shallow lakes in southern Minnesota and Iowa can no longer support these plants

and invertebrates. They are in a turbid-water state brought on by invasive fish such as carp, excessive nutrients, stable water levels and increased drainage from land that surrounds them.

Water control structures allow agencies to temporarily draw-down water levels in wetlands to winterkill fish, such as minnows, carp, and black bullheads, consolidate sediments, and allow emergent plants to germinate. When reflooded, aquatic plants and invertebrates flourish in wetlands following draw-downs and fish barriers help minimize the number of fish getting back into the basin.

“DU relies on strong public and private partnerships to keep our *Living Lakes* Initiative moving forward,” said Josh Kavanagh, DU’s shallow lakes field biologist based in New London. “Without strong support and involvement from all partners, including both state and federal agency field staff and private landowners, DU would not be able to implement this many shallow lake improvement projects.”

Two North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants secured by Pheasants Forever and the Minnesota DNR funded the engineering and water control structures DU is providing for Olson Lake, Sherstad Slough, and Hanson WPA. On Olson Lake, DNR also awarded a \$15,000 “Environmental Partnership” grant to DU from the Minnesota Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund as approved by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. Importantly, a generous donation of \$10,000 in pipe material costs was made to the project by Prinsco, Inc. To help round out the funding, the Hawk Creek Watershed Project pledged to help DU pay remaining project costs on Olson Lake.

To make Sherstad Slough and Hanson WPA possible, federal NAWCA grant funds were secured and made available by the Minnesota DNR from their \$1 million “Upper Minnesota Valley Phase 1” grant. The Service is also funding the work, and DU augmented those federal funds with state grant funds it received from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund through the Habitat Conservation Partnership as approved by the LCCMR. The Stevens Soil and Water Conservation District also provided funding for Sherstad Slough to complete the funding necessary to design the project.

To fund the Bah Lakes WPA project, DU is matching federal USFWS funding through a federal Challenge Cost-share grant with state grant monies from Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund that DU leveraged through the Habitat Conservation Partnership. Bah Lakes WPA is visible from I-94 and features a disabled accessible hunting blind. All the WPAs are open to public hunting and wildlife viewing.

With more than a million supporters, Ducks Unlimited is the world’s largest and most effective wetland and waterfowl conservation organization with more than 12 million acres conserved. The United States alone has lost more than half of its original wetlands – nature’s most productive ecosystem – and continues to lose more than 80,000 wetland acres each year.

-30-

For more information on DU’s programs in Minnesota, www.ducks.org/livinglakes.
Media contact: Becky Jones Mahlum, 701-355-3507 bjonesmahlum@ducks.org
Conservation contact: Jon Schneider, 320-762-9916 jschneider@ducks.org