



NEWS RELEASE

GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL OFFICE

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DU and DNR IMPROVING MANAGEMENT OF SIX SHALLOW LAKES IN SW MINNESOTA

MARSHALL, Minn., Nov. 4, 2008 – As the ducks make their annual fall migration, six large wetlands and shallow lakes on southwestern Minnesota’s “prairie coteau” are undergoing major improvements that will help keep them attractive to ducks for years to come. In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Ducks Unlimited is adding or replacing water control structures and fish barriers to six large basins between Marshall and Windom. The new structures will improve DNR’s ability to minimize fish and manage water levels to optimize clear water wetland habitat for waterfowl. The clean, clear water will help produce plants and invertebrates that attract and feed ducks and other waterfowl.

“These projects have been years in the making, and we are excited to be finally implementing them in partnership with DNR,” said Jon Schneider, manager of Minnesota conservation programs for DU. “Shallow lake improvement projects often take years to resolve management, land control and permit issues, as well as to engineer and secure funding for the project.”

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

Shallow lakes are large wetland basins greater than 50 acres in size but less than 15 feet deep. These wetlands 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 to consolidate sediments and winterkill fish. When reflooded, plants germinate and invertebrates flourish. Fish barriers help minimize the number of fish getting back in the lake.

“DU is very grateful for our strong public and private partnerships that help keep our *Living Lakes* Initiative moving forward,” said Josh Kavanagh, DU’s shallow lakes field biologist based in New London. “Without strong support from all partners, especially agency field staff and private landowners, DU would not be able to deliver this challenging and effective conservation program to improve shallow lakes.”

A North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant is funding the engineering and water control structures DU is providing on three of the big wetland basins. DU will spend more than \$250,000 in federal NAWCA grant funds secured in partnership with Pheasants Forever on the three projects. An equal amount of DU and DNR expense to improve 425-acre Lake Maria in Murray County was pledged as match to help PF leverage the new federal grant funds.

The grant will fund projects in two DNR wildlife management areas in Lyon County. The new water control structures will help manage the 85-acre Cupp's Slough on the Coon Creek WMA and the 94-acre Riddell Marsh on Lyons WMA. In Murray County, DU is installing a new water control structure weir in a judicial ditch to restore natural water levels in 100-acre Dovray Marsh.

DNR Area Wildlife Manager Bob Meyer says he is very excited to see the progress we've been able to make the past few years working on shallow lakes. "Because of our partnership with Ducks Unlimited and others, we've been able to collectively focus and prioritize these work efforts which are paying off dividends," Meyer said. "I've worked for the DNR for 36 years, and I'm still astounded by the vast improvements we can achieve by manipulating water levels and conducting draw downs."

In a unique partnership among DU, DNR, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and private landowners, DU engineered and is installing a water control structure on the outlet of 93-acre South Twin Lake. DNR secured easements from surrounding landowners, and USFWS provided a grant for half the project cost. DU is matching this contribution with state grant funds from the Minnesota Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund as approved by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. DU is a major partner in the "Habitat Conservation Partnership" that received a \$3.1 million LCCMR grant last year.

Further south, DU and DNR are working closely to restore 100-acre Mud Lake on Fulda WMA in Nobles County near Fulda, Minn. DU received a "Heritage Enhancement" grant from DNR to pay for excavation of the lake's outlet channel and to install a fish barrier screen. Finally, in Cottonwood County, DU engineered and will soon begin construction of a large velocity tube fish barrier several miles downstream of 500-acre Augusta Lake. This structure will prevent fish from migrating upstream into several large wetlands and into Augusta Lake following a managed water level draw-downs and natural fish winterkill. The project is being cooperatively funded by DNR, DU, a NAWCA small grant secured by DNR and a \$10,000 contribution from the Cottonwood County Game and Fish Club that DNR matched with "Reinvest in Minnesota" funds.

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.

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For more information on DU's programs in Minnesota, www.ducks.org/livinglakes.

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