

STATE CONSERVATION REPORT

KANSAS • 2019

Ducks Unlimited's conservation program in Kansas continues to improve wetlands for birds. We secured additional funding from several granting sources and continue to expand our programs to new areas in the Sunflower State.

We completed conservation projects on several public wildlife areas (WA), which will improve wetland management capabilities. With new improvements, managers can impound water in new marshes, pump water and control water levels for ideal wetland conditions in the spring and fall. This provides more reliable habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Project sites included McPherson Valley Wetlands WA, Byron Walker WA, Perry WA and Clinton WA.

Flooding has slowed some restoration activities at several sites, including Gamekeeper Marsh, Kanopolis Reservoir, Melvern WA, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and McPherson WA. We hope to soon have drier conditions that will allow these projects to wrap up.

Other projects are being planned and delivered at Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge, the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita, Gurley Marsh WA, Sherman WA, Lovewell WA and Cottonwood Flats WA. We are developing new project phases at Cheyenne Bottoms, Neosho WA, Slate Creek WA and Talmo WA. Ducks Unlimited has also assisted on several land acquisitions to increase public lands, including tracts in

Cherokee, Labette, and Kingman counties, as well as at the Cheyenne Bottoms complex.

The Ducks Unlimited conservation program in Kansas has never been stronger and continues to gain ground. We are excited to begin a new year, get some great projects completed and take on new projects.

*Matt Hough
Manager of Conservation Programs in Kansas*

Bring Back the Bottoms campaign launched in Kansas

Ducks Unlimited and its partners launched an ambitious two-year fundraising campaign to renovate Cheyenne Bottoms, one the largest inland wetlands in the United States. The 64-square-mile public wildlife area is owned by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) and is a wetland area of international importance for migratory birds. The area is also an economic engine for central Kansas.

"Cheyenne Bottoms is an essential stop-over for millions of birds during their spring and fall migrations," said Matt Hough, DU's manager of conservation programs for Kansas. "The area



COURTESY JOHN MORANDI

*Early hunters at Cheyenne Bottoms, sportsmen
Ed O'Brien and W.G. (Doc) Strong.*





supports 350 bird species. Half of North America’s shorebirds and endangered whooping cranes visit every year.”

With 41,000 acres of shallow wetlands and grass, the area is recognized as internationally important to birds by the Ramsar Convention, National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy. Nearly 60,000 birders, hunters and other nature enthusiasts visit from across the county annually, generating nearly \$3 million to Kansas’s economy.



“Unfortunately, the wetland’s ability to attract birds has declined and will only get worse unless we act,” Hough said. “The Bottoms is filling up with silt, which plugs water-control structures and other infrastructure needed to keep the wetland in healthy condition.”

The area’s last major renovation was done in the early 1990s and KDWPT wetland managers are struggling to maintain quality habitat due to aging and dilapidated infrastructure. Ducks Unlimited and KDWPT developed a multi-year major renovation plan estimated to cost more than \$2 million.

“Our partners at KDWPT have some public dollars available, but we must raise an additional \$300,000 in private dollars to leverage and access those funds,” Hough said. “Ducks Unlimited has stepped up to help with fundraising and the restoration effort.”

DU is planning two special fundraising events in fall 2019:

Camp Aldrich - Barton County, KS - August 15, 2019. Contact Josh Williams: (785) 443-4486 or jwilliams@ducks.org
Kansas City, KS - December 2019. Contact Chris Young: (913) 605-1063 or cyoung@ducks.org

For information on how you can help, Bring Back the Bottoms, contact:

Josh Williams: (785) 443-4486 or jwilliams@ducks.org • Kirk Davidson: (303) 927-1949 or kdavidson@ducks.org
Eric Lindstrom: (701) 355-3503 or elindstrom@ducks.org

McPherson Valley Wetlands gets use by ducks and people



Hunter success and satisfaction were high during the early teal season this past September at the McPherson Valley Wetlands (MVW) Wildlife Area in Kansas. Ducks Unlimited and its partner, KDWPT, are celebrating the restoration of 90 acres of wetlands on MVW in McPherson County.

Irrigation brings water to the east wetland unit, and millet was planted last fall. Millet is a beneficial seed producer for waterfowl.

The MVW wetlands were part of a large depression that covered the region and provided rich waterfowl habitat. Over time, this landscape was leveled and ditched to enhance cropping potential.

Restoration crews installed levees and water-control structures to improve water management. The uplands and levees surrounding the restored wetlands were planted with native grass species. Using funding from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, DU’s engineering team designed the wetland restorations so they would not impact neighboring private lands.

Future restoration plans include installing additional pipeline to increase pumping capabilities that will bring water into the western wetland unit. DU’s next step is to restore the Shirk Marsh area in the northwest portion of MVW. Ducks Unlimited engineers designed a series of dikes with a water-control



DU helps conserve private lands that benefit all

Ducks Unlimited’s Playa Conservation Initiative (PCI) continues to be the biggest focus of the private lands program in Kansas. The PCI is driven by private land conservation in western Kansas because playas occur almost entirely on private agricultural lands. Playa wetlands are important for their wildlife value and the critical role they play in recharging the Ogallala Aquifer, the primary source of water for much of the state.

Especially important is the work DU is doing with municipalities that have jeopardized groundwater supplies. DU is targeting playa restorations where they can help recharge the Ogallala Aquifer and help provide a sustainable water source for these communities.

Through DU’s partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture and other partners, DU Biologist Abe Lollar helps landowners establish Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that benefit the landowner and conserve playas. In 2018, the playa partnership was able to establish 220 CRP contracts that will conserve 11,681 acres of playas and surrounding buffers. Ducks Unlimited also established four playa conservation easements through a Natural Resources Conservation Service-Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant. Various other conservation agreements on playas have been developed as part of this grant as well.

Additional private land efforts are occurring along the Rattlesnake Creek and Republican River corridor. Ducks Unlimited focuses on tree removal in wetlands in this region to increase water flows and improve several thousand acres of habitat. An increasing number of landowners are interested in wetland conservation projects along the Ninnescah, Kansas, Marais des Cygnes, Neosho and Arkansas rivers as well as other landscapes across Kansas. DU provides landowners with technical assistance and cost-share opportunities to conserve wetland habitats. Interest in Ducks Unlimited’s private land habitat work continues to grow.



structure to restore this drained farm field and manage the wetlands for ideal wetland conditions.

“This will provide another 90-acre marsh with associated restored tallgrass prairie habitat around the buffer. Designing and permitting are complete, and we are now waiting for site conditions to improve to begin construction,” DU Manager of Conservation Programs Matt Hough said.

MVW Wildlife Area is in the middle of the Central Flyway and provides migration habitat for waterfowl traveling between the Gulf Coast and the Prairie Pothole Region. The wetlands on the Wildlife Area contribute to a landscape that includes Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Cheyenne Bottoms and supports large concentrations of birds in the spring.

McPherson WA is open to the public for hunting and other recreation. Visit the KDWPT site, ksoutdoors.com, for more information.

DU manager named state conservation champion

Ducks Unlimited Special Projects Manager Joe Kramer is the winner of the 2019 Kansas Conservation Champion Award. Seven Kansas natural resources societies recognized Kramer at the Kansas Natural Resources Conference in Manhattan.

Joe worked with KDWPT for 35 years. He served as chief of the Wildlife and Fisheries Division for 26 years, working with federal agencies through numerous federal farm bills and conservation programs. When Joe retired, he began managing projects for DU and is a wetland coordinator for the Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams (KAWS).

The award honors outstanding dedication, innovation and leadership for the conservation, protection, enhancement and stewardship of Kansas’ natural heritage and resources. Joe’s network of partners





from his KDWPT career expanded and strengthened stakeholder relationships in western Kansas.

His efforts facilitated record-breaking Wetlands Reserve Easement signups, enhanced the playa wetland Conservation Reserve Program-State Acres for Wildlife

Enhancement program and expanded KDWPT's Walk in Hunting Access.

Visit www.kansasnrc.org for information about the award and the Kansas Natural Resources Conference.

Kansas spring events

Cheney Reservoir Dinner- Saturday, March 2, 2019

Smoky Valley- Saturday, March 2, 2019

Waconda Dinner- Saturday, March 2, 2019

Johnson County DU Spring Dinner & Mega Gun Raffle-
Saturday, March 2, 2019

Salina Area Dinner- Saturday, March 2, 2019

Spring River (Baxter Springs) DU Dinner-
Saturday, March 2, 2019

John Redmond Ducks Unlimited Dinner-
Saturday, March 2, 2019

Garnett Dinner- Saturday, March 9, 2019

Ducks Unlimited Week at Pebble Beach-
Sunday, March 17, 2019

Hiawatha Whiskey, Wine & Wetlands III Dinner Banquet-
Saturday, March 23, 2019

Ninnescah (Clearwater) Dinner- Saturday, March 23, 2019

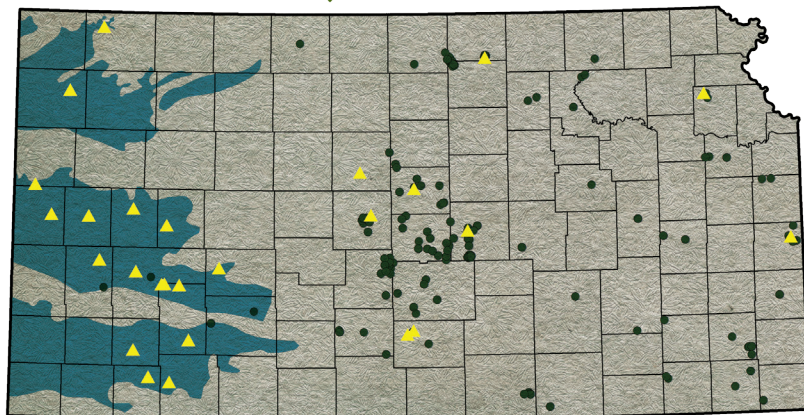
Clay County Dinner- Saturday, March 23, 2019

Northwest Kansas Dinner- Saturday, April 6, 2019

Cheyenne Bottoms Dinner- Saturday, April 6, 2019

Seneca Area 45th Annual Ducks Unlimited Dinner-
Saturday, April 6, 2019

KS PROJECTS • 1990-2018



2018 Accomplishments

(Based on numbers available 01/01/19)

9,056 acres protected, restored or enhanced

\$1,310,740 invested

● Completed projects: 1990-2017

▲ 2018 Completed projects

■ Playa Lakes Region - Playa lakes are small, depressional wetlands in western Kansas that provide critical migration habitat for waterfowl. These wetlands also filter and recharge the water supply in the Ogallala aquifer.

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.

STATE CONTACTS

For information on DU's conservation programs:

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For information on becoming a Major Sponsor:

Kirk Davidson, Director of Development - CO, KS
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For information on event fundraising:

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