

DU CONSERVATION REPORT

Kansas
2018



BLUE-WINGED TEAL (MALE)

Matt Hough, Manager of Conservation Programs in Kansas

Another strong year closed on Ducks Unlimited's conservation programs in Kansas and a new year lies ahead. With the support of our volunteers and strong partnerships, we brought in additional dollars from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant and began private lands delivery through our Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant.

We have undertaken a 50-acre wetland renovation on two sites at Byron Walker Wildlife Area (WA) in Kingman County. New berms and water-control structures will improve the manager's ability to manipulate water levels for ideal wetland conditions. DU also closed on a nearly 500-acre acquisition that abuts the WA and will be transferred to Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT). This property includes more than a mile of the south fork of the Ninnescah River with riparian wetlands, native prairie and cropland.

DU is installing a new pump on the banks of the Delaware River at Perry WA. It will service Reichart Marsh and Northwest Marsh with plans to add a pipeline to Headquarters Marsh. The pump can supply water to 200 acres of wetlands for reliable migration habitat. This is a great example of what a dedicated group of sportspeople can accomplish as this project came about through financial support of our local DU volunteers. Funds were leveraged with various grant sources to complete the project this spring.

At McPherson Valley Wetlands WA, Ducks Unlimited worked on a 90-acre renovation that added wetland and upland habitat. Nearby, we designed another 90-acre wetland project that is in the permitting phase with construction planned for this summer.

Becoming too many to list, but too important not to mention, wetland restorations and improvements are underway at Cheyenne Bottoms, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Jamestown WA. At the Kanopolis Reservoir, we are assisting KDWPT and the Army Corps of Engineers along the Smoky Hill River to add several hundred new wetland acres. In Cherokee County, we assisted with the acquisition of nearly 700 acres of public lands with more planned using NAWCA funding. Restorations are slated at several other areas including Clinton WA, Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge, the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita, Gurley Marsh WA, and secondary phases at Neosho WA and Talmo WA.

Our program also includes dozens of private lands projects in various stages of construction and delivery across the state. With the variety of projects winding down or being completed, the DU team continues to move the needle in the right direction for wildlife and their habitats in the Sunflower State.

KANSAS PRODUCERS AND DU MEET CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION



(left to right) Michael Findlay, Matt Hough, Rep. Roger Marshall, Andy Hineman, Alicia Allen, Liza Mar Barragan and Mark Smith.

Ducks Unlimited and partner producers from Kansas met in Washington, D.C. with the Kansas congressional delegation to talk about conservation priorities in the upcoming Farm Bill.

Andy Hineman from Scott City, Alicia Allen from Sharon Springs, and Mark E. Smith from Wallace are producers from western Kansas who take part in voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs funded through the Farm Bill. The group met with Congressman Roger Marshall (R-KS-01), Congressman Ron Estes (R-KS-04), Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins (R-KS-02) and Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS).

DU works with producers across Kansas to educate them on Farm Bill programs and assists them with the signup process.

“Farm Bill programs like the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program, Conservation Reserve Program and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program are vital for our nation’s wildlife and their habitats, as well as for our agricultural communities,” said Michael Findlay, DU government affairs representative on state policy.

“It is critical that legislators hear from their constituents as the time to renew the Farm Bill approaches. These are the people using and benefiting from Farm Bill programs,” said Matt Hough, DU manager of conservation programs in Kansas. “We need to ensure these programs are funded for the benefit of wildlife and producers.”



EIGHT FAMILIES HELP RESTORE 1,660 ACRES ON NEOSHO WILDLIFE AREA

The conservation vision of a few sportsmen was instrumental in one of Ducks Unlimited’s largest Kansas projects. DU worked with the KDWPT and other partners to restore and enhance 1,660 acres on Neosho Wildlife Area, providing habitat for wildlife and outdoor recreation.

“We need to credit the eight families who had the dream and made it happen,” Director of Development Kirk Davidson said. “They provided dollars that allowed DU to leverage additional public funds.”

Don Budd, former KDWPT commissioner, got a few hunters together who contributed to the work.

“You may think one vote doesn’t count in an election or one donation won’t make a difference, but in this case, it’s not true. A limited amount of private dollars turned into a project,” Budd said.

Other project sponsors were Corky Beachner, Chris Terlip, Bob Stratton, Doug Henzlik, Roy Carter, and Barrett and Spencer Satterlee. Grant support came from NAWCA and Pittman Robinson Act funds. Other partners included The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, The Watershed Institute, Neosho County Commission, Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams, Kansas Wildlife Federation and the Southeast Kansas Audubon Society.

Owned by KDWPT, Neosho Wildlife Area provides vital habitat and public access. In addition to restoration work, the projects improved water management infrastructure.

“The restorations will help Neosho managers do more with less water and provide more habitat year-around,” said Matt Hough, DU manager of conservation programs for Kansas.

MOVING FORWARD WITH PLAYA PRIORITIES

In 2015, Ducks Unlimited developed a targeted initiative to improve habitat in the Playa Lakes Region of western Kansas. These shallow wetlands are significant migration habitat for waterfowl in the Central Flyway and are almost entirely on private lands. Healthy partnerships with landowners are crucial to conservation success. With staff to implement this program, including two biologists and a manager of conservation programs dedicated to the state, DU is receiving grants, enrolling landowners in conservation programs and creating awareness about these important ecosystems.

In January, DU and partners held the second landowner workshop and tour as part of the outreach efforts to educate people about the Playa Lakes Region and conservation program options. This event will occur annually in rotating locations throughout the region. Ducks Unlimited



Biologists Joe Kramer and Abe Lollar are also conducting abbreviated landowner workshops in local communities and meeting with landowners individually.

Grants and other funding were awarded to help landowners maintain their operations while conserving the playas. A more than \$600,000 NAWCA grant was awarded for playa restoration allowing DU to help landowners cost-share restoration practices not covered under partner programs. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) awarded Ducks Unlimited and the Playa Lakes Joint Venture a \$2.5 million Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant for conservation projects and to increase staffing.

Many conservation program options exist from the NRCS and Farm Service Agency, and DU is helping landowners access them. KDWPT has a cost-share program that helps restore playas and promote walk-in hunting access to increase land access to the public.

Several factors contributed to the recent playa lake conservation achievements. Strong committed partnerships and landowner awareness are the foundation for continued success. The Kansas DU staff will continue to support these efforts into the future.



KANSAS BIOLOGIST ABE LOLLAR

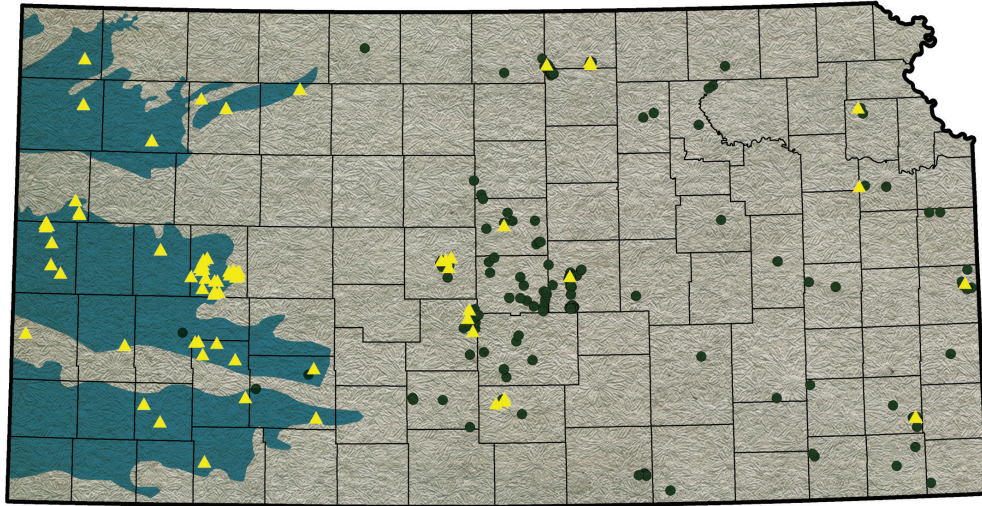
Abe is the DU biologist working in Kansas to advance DU’s playa wetlands program and other priorities in the state. Abe has previous experience with the KDWPT where he served as a private lands biologist. Abe is from Derby, Kansas, and is active in the Garden City Ducks Unlimited chapter. He also won DU’s Wetland Biologist of the Year award at the Kansas State Convention in 2016 for his work with KDWPT in the playa region.

ducks unlimited
KS PROJECTS
1990-2017

● Completed projects - 1990-2016

▲ 2017 Completed projects

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.



Accomplishments* 30,894 acres protected, restored or enhanced • \$15,425,339 invested

■ 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.

*Based on numbers available 01/01/18

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GREAT PLAINS REGION

our mission

Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.