



*80 Years of Conservation*

# DU CONSERVATION REPORT 2017

## (KANSAS)

Partnerships are helping Ducks Unlimited accomplish conservation goals in Kansas. Farmers and ranchers will benefit from a new Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant. The funding will provide opportunities for 480 acres or more of conservation easements to protect Kansas wildlife habitat, while helping producers implement conservation programs. The grant will fund restoration and protection, as well as landowner outreach and education. The restored habitat will also improve water quality and groundwater recharge.

Ducks Unlimited and partners have completed most of a 3,000-acre wetland

restoration and enhancement project in south-central Kansas on Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The project focuses on Big Salt Marsh and Little Salt Marsh. The work will restore the wetlands' natural hydrology and enable refuge staff to manage water levels to improve wildlife habitats.

The more than 22,000-acre refuge is a combination of rare inland salt marshes and sand prairie. The marshes attract thousands of waterfowl during spring and fall migration. Quivira NWR is also one of the continent's most important whooping crane migration stops. This project was funded by North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)

grants and matching funds from DU and partners. The NWR is open to the public.

Ducks Unlimited is involved in a multi-phase project at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and the Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve, totaling more than a thousand acres of habitat delivery. DU and partners started this wetland restoration and enhancement project with help from three NAWCA grants and matching funds. These state conservation areas are crucial stopping points for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. An estimated 45 percent of the North American shorebird population stops here during the spring migration.



## EVENING OF CONSERVATION TRANSLATES INTO BIG IMPROVEMENTS FOR NEOSHO WA

In 2012, Ducks Unlimited member Don Budd, a former Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) commissioner, assembled a small group of fellow duck hunters in a Neosho area hunting lodge. The purpose of this gathering was to learn about Ducks Unlimited’s conservation work in Kansas and raise funds to enhance wetland habitat on Neosho Wildlife Area (WA). Steve Donovan, who was then DU manager of conservation programs for Kansas, gave the group an overview of Kansas waterfowl habitat projects. Kirk Davidson, director of development in Kansas, highlighted the impact private gift dollars have in leveraging funds from federal and state sources to conduct large habitat improvement projects, such as what was needed at Neosho.

This Evening of Conservation secured more than \$60,000 in commitments from the attendees with an additional \$60,000 from pledges by friends who could not attend. The success of

this event helped DU leverage funds with a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, Pittman-Robertson funds, and KDWPT budgets to target renovation of the main wetland unit at Neosho WA.

From that initial meeting until 2017, DU has been improving structures that will make Neosho WA a premiere migration stop for waterfowl as well as improve public hunting opportunities. Construction began in fall 2016 and was completed in early 2017. More than 1,600 acres of wetlands were enhanced by levee construction and a new pump station that is capable of moving up to 12,000 gallons of water a minute into the marsh units. The pump station will allow managers to promote quality vegetation growth, providing ideal wetland conditions for waterfowl and other wildlife.



*Water pump with protective screen installed on Neosho WA. The pump is surrounded by steel bollards that block large debris that could damage the pump.*

## TALMO PROJECT A COOPERATIVE EFFORT



*Water control structure will regulate water levels in wetland impoundment on Talmo WA.*

From the initial assessment, through purchase to wetland construction, the projects at Talmo Wildlife Area have been one of interagency, landowner and conservation organization cooperation. Several groups came together with Ducks Unlimited and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) to form the partnership behind writing the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant proposals to acquire, protect, and restore the Talmo wetlands.

KDWPT district biologist, Ron Ruthstrom, had the vision to bring this project together. Ruthstrom identified wetlands at Talmo and the surrounding area for conservation and preservation. “We’re not making any more of these wetlands,” he said.

DU purchased four tracts, of which three were enrolled in the USDA Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). The WRP contracts have perpetual easements and conservation plans to restore wetland and upland habitat. KDWPT purchased the three WRP tracts and has modified the contracts to expand the amount of restored habitat, while reducing the overall cost.

Currently, DU is completing work on additional tracts purchased through the partnership. Water control structures, wetland impoundments, and cropland reseeding are all part of the improvements to the properties. In addition, Republic County improved three-quarters of a mile of road leading to the tracts as part of their NAWCA partnership contribution.

## DU’S NEW PLAYA LAKE INITIATIVE

Ducks Unlimited has initiated large-scale conservation efforts in Kansas, focusing on the Playa Lakes Region. Working with diverse partners that also see playa conservation as a top priority, DU has established a goal to restore more than 2,000 acres of playas and adjacent grasslands. By building a comprehensive Playa Lake program in the region, the partners will begin to offset the 70 percent of Playa Lakes that have been damaged or destroyed.

Playa Lake restoration includes filling drainages, planting upland buffers and removing sediment. DU’s focus is establishing conservation easements to protect playa wetlands and to promote restoration opportunities to landowners in the region. The Playa Lakes Region covers much of the western Great Plains and includes all of western Kansas. More than 10,000 shallow, ephemeral wetlands dot the landscape and range from a few acres to hundreds of acres in size. They are characterized by their closed watersheds and clay-lined bottoms that collect water from runoff. Playas support a variety of plants and invertebrates, which provide cover and food for migrating waterfowl and hundreds of other species. Playas recharge groundwater and filter water entering the Ogallala aquifer, which is vital to the economy and sustainability of many Kansas communities.

Additional program options and opportunities are available with support from partners. If you are interested in more details or supporting this program, please contact Matt Hough, Kansas regional biologist, at [mhough@ducks.org](mailto:mhough@ducks.org) or 308-850-2717.



## DAVID PAUL BECOMES KANSAS STATE CHAIR

Ducks Unlimited in Kansas has a new state chair. David Paul is a U.S. Army Veteran who grew up in Perham, Minnesota, where he was surrounded by lakes and wetlands. Paul says he doesn’t currently duck hunt, but the passionate people and the mission of DU inspires him to support the organization.

“Most of the lakes and wetlands where I grew up are gone. Now there are flooding problems that we didn’t have in the past because we don’t have the wetlands on the land to absorb all the excess water,” he said.

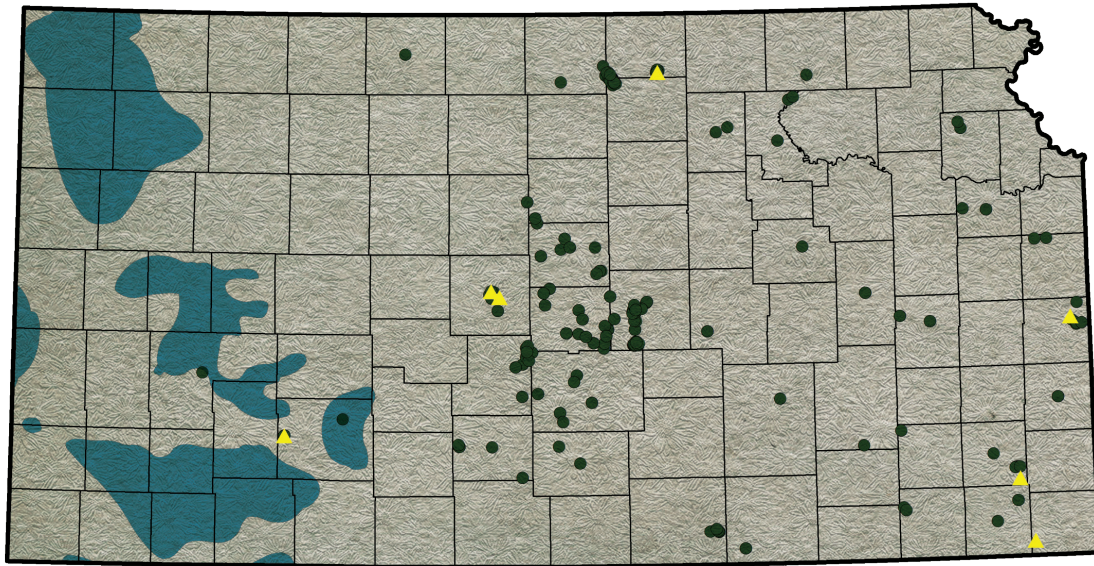
David attended his first DU banquet in Japan where he was working for the U.S. Army. He has been a DU volunteer since 1999, a committee chair in Leavenworth, Kansas for 15 years, and a district chair for nine years. He is also on the DU committee in his home town where he helps his son who is the area chair.

ducks unlimited  
**KS PROJECTS**  
 1990-2016

● Completed projects - 1990-2015

▲ 2016 Completed projects

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.



**Accomplishments\*** 25,192 acres protected, restored or enhanced • \$14,157,263 invested

■ Playa Lakes Region - Playa lakes are small, depressional wetlands in western Kansas that provide wildlife habitat including critical migration habitat to waterfowl as well as groundwater recharge and water filtration for the Ogallala aquifer.

\*Based on numbers available 01/01/17

## KANSAS STATE CONTACTS:

**For information on DU's conservation programs:**

Matt Hough, Regional Biologist - KS  
 mhough@ducks.org • (308) 850-2717

**For information on becoming a Major Sponsor:**

Kirk Davidson, Director of Development - CO, KS  
 kdavidson@ducks.org • (303) 927-1949

**For information on event fundraising:**

David Paul, State Chairman - KS  
 dpaul@kc.rr.com • (913) 297-4170

John Ritchey, Senior Regional Director - Central KS  
 jritchey@ducks.org • (785) 844-1136

Josh Williams, Regional Director - West KS  
 jwilliams@ducks.org • (785) 443-4486

Chris Young, Regional Director - Eastern KS  
 cyoung@ducks.org • (913) 333-2922



Great Plains Region • 2525 River Road • Bismarck, ND 58503  
 701.355.3500 • 701.355.3575 (Fax)

*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.