



# Cattails



## Special points of interest:

- MN DU State Convention Awards
- Freeborn County DU Projects
- MN DU Strategic Plan
- New MN Regional Map

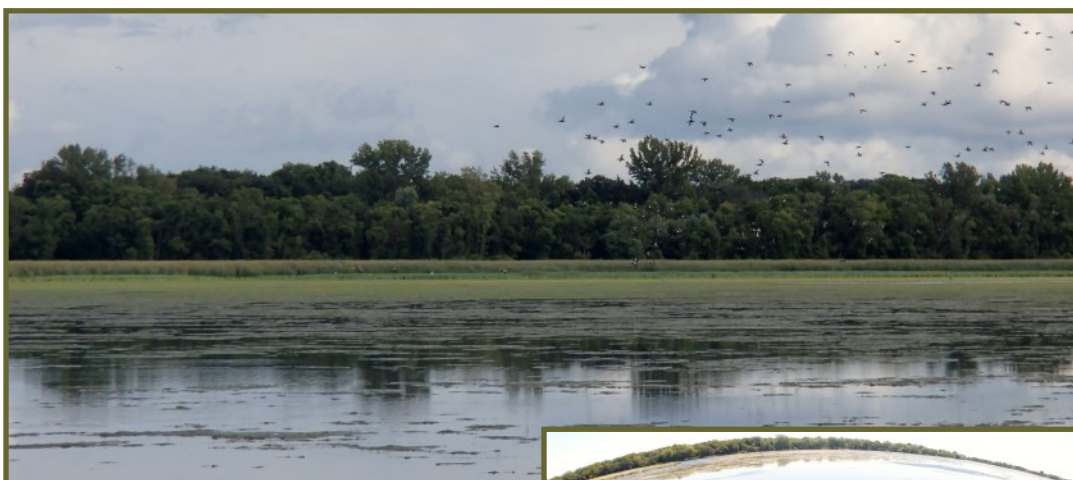
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Winter 2016

Official Newsletter of Minnesota Ducks Unlimited

## FREEBORN COUNTY WATERFOWL MECCA



Above: A swarm of blue-winged teal get up off of Bear Lake in Freeborn County during a DNR lake vegetation survey in 2014. Photograph courtesy of the Minnesota DNR.

Right: An aerial view of Geneva Lake from last summer shows thick beds of submerged vegetation, which attracts migrating redheads and canvasbacks as well as other ducks, after the 2007 drawdown.



**More about the Freeborn County Waterfowl Mecca on page 6**



## State Chair's Chatter



**Brian Ross, State Chair**

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Hi all,

What a great time we had in the Albert Lea area this past summer for the State Council Meeting. Our hosts, Karen and Bob Sorenson, made sure everyone felt comfortable and had everything they needed. The Friday evening get-together was held at their farmstead south of town. The evening started out with some friendly trapshooting competition, with Jerry Weltzin's automatic clay pigeon thrower. It can throw something like 20 pigeons a minute, which made for some interesting flurry shooting. We then moved to the garage for some refreshments and boasting. Bob and Karen opened their home for dinner and a major donor meeting next to their downstairs bar. The evening was capped off with a birthday cake for Senior Regional Director Scottie Anderson and more camaraderie.



Bob and Karen Sorenson, our State Council Meeting hosts, at the State Line Lake Dedication Ceremony.

The next morning was the State Council meeting, which was well attended even though it was on the Iowa border. Literally, right on the Iowa border in Emmons, MN. In fact, I parked my vehicle on the corner of Main Street and 510th Street and Iowa started in the middle of 510th Street. The meeting was held in the Emmons VFW in downtown Emmons and had over 40 people in attendance from all over Minnesota, including a couple of DNR Section of Wildlife staff, Dave Trauba, Region 4 Wildlife Manager, and Jeanine Vorland, Area Wildlife Manager from Albert Lea. Along with providing an update on the 80 projects DU is working on in the state, DU conservation staff surprised Jeanine with the 2015 Minnesota Conservation Partner of the Year Award (see photo).

The State Line Lake Dedication Ceremony was after the State Council meeting. Again, we had a great turnout, even though the temperatures were in the upper 80s and the humidity at 80 percent as well. The State Line Lake Association, one of the project partners, had several members present, as did DNR. The dedication ceremony took place at the control structure, but we also took a hay wagon tour of the new State Line Wildlife Management Area and the carry-in public access.

Finally, after the dedication, Jon Schneider, Manager of Conservation in Minnesota led a tour of some of the many projects in the area. I don't know about you, but I love the projects tours because that is where we get to see the fruition of all our volunteer labors. The first stop was Bear Lake, a project that DU completed with DNR a few years ago, where we saw a lake in great shape with thick beds of vegetation spread across the surface. The next stop was the Twin Lakes Public Access to talk about a future DU project. Third was the Hagen RIM/WRP project. The last stop was the legendary Geneva Lake, where Jeanine Vorland provided a history about the lake and the success of the project.

Thanks for reading my chatter; I hope to meet you in my travels to DU events around the great state of Minnesota.



Jon Schneider (center) and myself present the Minnesota Conservation Partner of the Year Award to Jeanine Vorland.





## MINNESOTAN DU AWARDS AT THE STATE CONVENTION



Former RD Brad Jensen with MN DU's top award, the Jimmy Robinson Award. With him are RVC Joe Schlagel on left and RD Scott Anderson on the right.



*These are MN DU's  
Annual Awards*



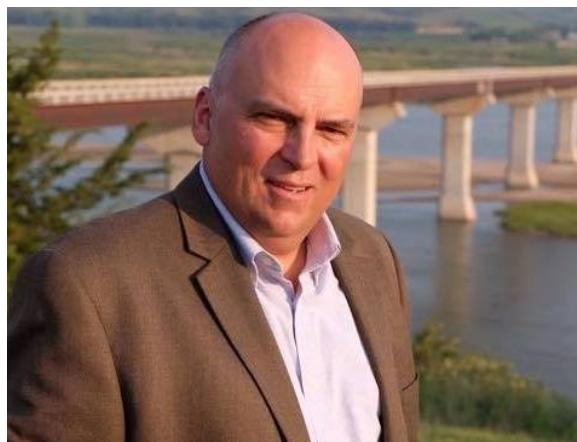
RVC Kyle Thaemlitz (right) accepts the Tommy Nelson, MN DU's "Do it for the Ducks" award from State Chair Brian Ross.



Mark Pederson (center) received the Landowski Leadership Award for his leadership working with the Gambling Control Board and legislators on the new gambling requirements. The award was presented by State Council Chair, Tim Roble (right).



The Kruses, Susan, Mike, and Nick, owners of Church Offset Printing, were very surprised to be given the Win Stephens Award, which recognizes our corporate donors. RD Scott Anderson (left) and Bob and Karen Sorenson, presented the award.



Another Jimmy Robinson Award was given away to former RD Terry Kostinec, but he could not attend the convention. Here is Terry in his new haunts and DU position as Director of Development for Nebraska and South Dakota.



## 2016 MN DU Strategic Plan

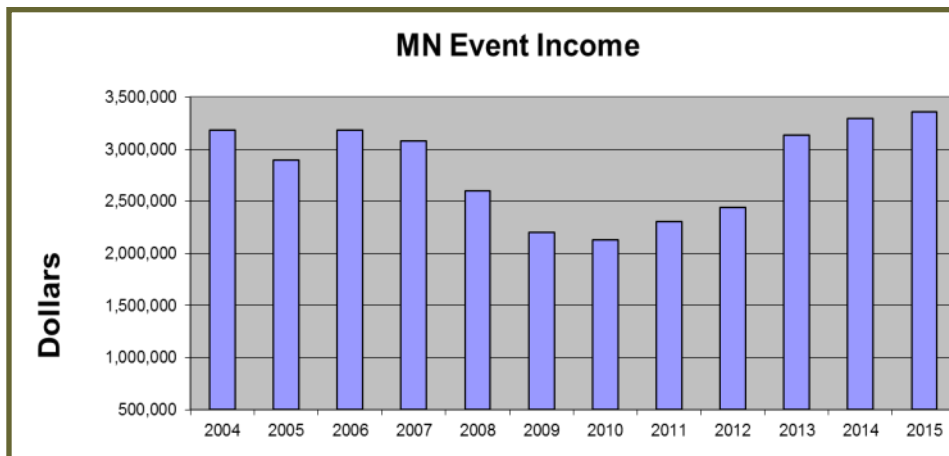


MN DU prepares a strategic plan every three to five years to provide goals and direction for the organization. This January, senior volunteers and several staff met at the Viking Valley Hunt Club near Ashby, MN to review past plans and come up with ideas to drive MN DU's success into the future.

The planning committee included Brian Ross, Ruth Hoefs, Gerry Bergquist, Tim Roble, Bob and Karen Sorenson, Dan Scheffler, Jim Demgen, Scott Christensen, Peter Eigen, Kyle Thaemlitz, Gordon Winstanley, Bill Januszewski, Kevin Prouty, David Dirks, Joe Schlagel, Kyle Momsen, Scott Anderson, Andrew Limmer, Patrick Patterson, Jon Schneider, Adam Dehaan, Dave Flink, and Bret Plasters.

Part of the process was to review major indicators of how we are doing to get an understanding of what is working. Minnesota DU has done a fantastic job of increasing membership, sponsors, major donors, and special events, resulting in increased revenue for Ducks Unlimited programs. The main measure of this success is the increasing trend in event income. As seen below, MNDU has experienced an upward trend in event income since the

2010 planning meeting.



The main goal of the strategic planning committee is to continue the fund raising success, and event income is the major indicator of the fundraising success of MN DU volunteers and staff. By increasing the fundraising, DU can accomplish more conservation in MN and in other areas of North America. With that in mind, it was determined that keeping the upward trend going was the important. With a 2015 event income of about \$3.4 million, a goal of \$4 million by 2019 was chosen.

### Goal – Increase Event Income \$600,000 to over \$4 million by 2019

Through the process, three key areas were identified to increase the event income and reach the \$4 million goal. These key areas are:

**Key Area 1 – Increase Membership**

**Key Area 2 – Grow Volunteer Ranks**

**Key Area 3 – Major Donor Focus**





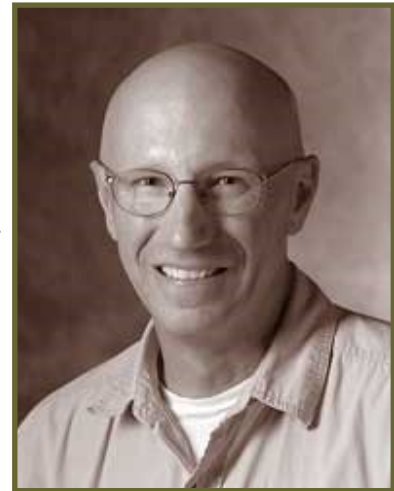
## Minnesota Artists' Corner—Gene Stevens

Gene Stevens was born and raised in Peterson, a small town in southeastern Minnesota. He grew up roaming the bluffs and learning to fish on the various streams that run through this area. He has always had an interest in art and wildlife. At an early age he remembers having his Dad draw animals for him and then trying to draw them on his own.

Gene graduated from St. Olaf College in 1973 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in art education and for 34 years taught art in Lewiston, MN before his retirement in 2007. He has also done freelance artwork throughout the years and twice was a finalist in the Minnesota pheasant stamp competition. Stevens has donated work to various conservation groups, local civic organizations in addition to several demonstration shows at the National Eagle Center in nearby Wabasha, MN.

Gene's originals appear in private collections throughout the country and his images have been licensed by companies across the United States for different product lines as well as publications for groups such as Safari Club International.

Gene and his wife, Tamara, now reside in Altura, Minnesota, just above the Whitewater Valley, where they enjoy fly fishing, running, music and hunting, in addition to hand-crafting primitive archery equipment and fishing nets.



Artwork provided courtesy of Gene Owens and Wild Wings, LLC, Lake City, Minnesota.  
800-445-4833  
[www.wildwings.com](http://www.wildwings.com)

Right: "That's My Dad" painting

This image of a pair Canada Geese and their reflections is named appropriately, "Morning Reflections".



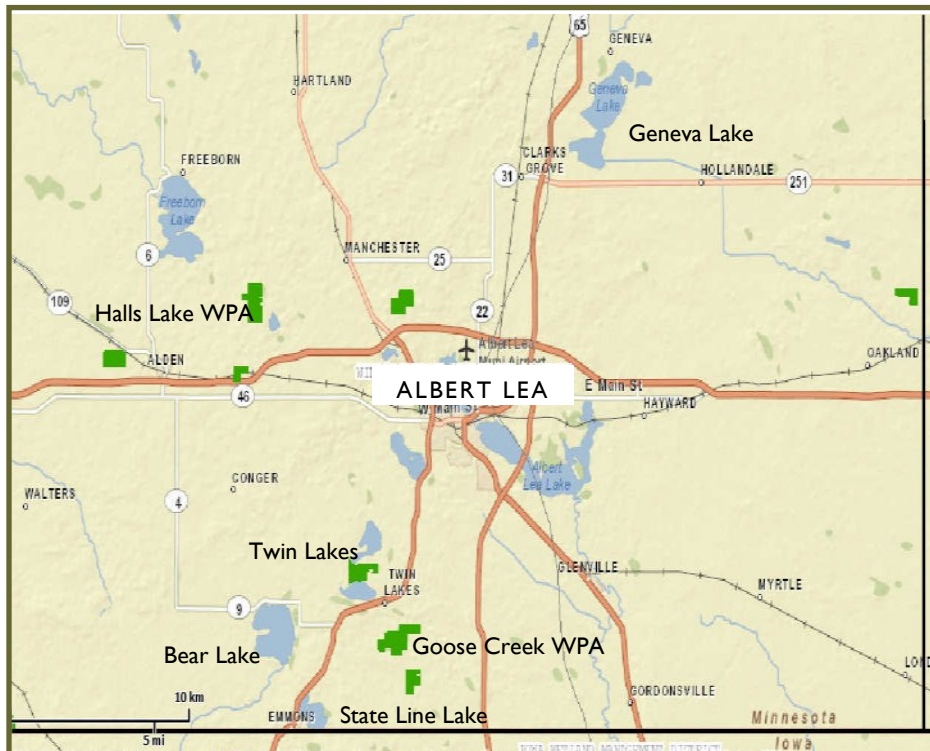
Gene definitely has a sense of humor and understanding of our outdoor adventures. This shows in the painting below of a dog and his master motoring in a canoe, titled "Don't Rock the Boat".



Loons are often the subject of Gene's paintings and they are incredibly realistic as seen in the outstanding example above titled "Renewal".



# Freeborn County Waterfowl Mecca



Above: A map of Freeborn County showing the location of Albert Lea and the names of the DU projects in the large black letters.

Below: The DU constructed outlet structure on the channel out of Geneva Lake.

Ducks Unlimited has done so many projects in Freeborn County that it is becoming a waterfowl mecca. The projects consist of a mix of wetland restoration projects and DU Living Lakes Initiative lake enhancements. When you look at the county map, you can see there are projects scattered all over the county.

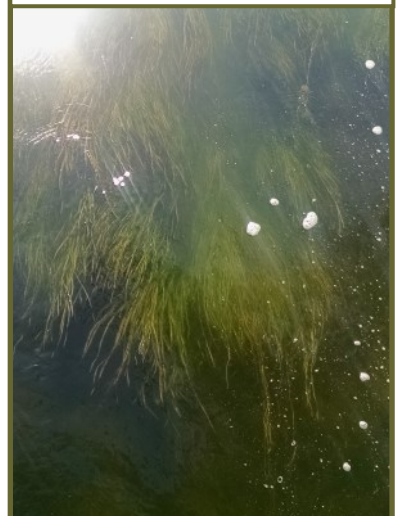
DU has been working in Freeborn County since 1986, when it worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore three wetlands at the Halls Lake Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) and one more in 1994. Details of the Halls Lake WPA project are included in the Project Hall of Fame on page 10.

The first in the series of recent DU projects was the Geneva Lake enhancement project. Geneva Lake was historically a destination waterfowl lake, both for hunters and ducks, especially canvasbacks. It was one of the canvasback waystops for their migration to the east coast, but that changed in the 1960s as common carp and a fixed crest dam resulted in turbid conditions, sparse aquatic vegetation, and little duck use.

To improve the lake, DU partnered with MnDNR, Freeborn County, local landowners and other stakeholders to engineer and construct a new outlet to



Below: Wild celery, also called eel grass, grows profusely in the outlet channel above the fish barrier.





## Freeborn County Waterfowl Mecca (Continued)

include a draw-down and also a fish barrier. The lake was drawn down in the fall of 2006 and the structure completed over the winter. The DNR “rotenoned” the lake as well to remove overwintering fish.

The results of the project have been fantastic with aquatic vegetation returning in abundance (see photos). The *Cattails*’ editor visited the lake while on a tour of the area led by DNR’s Jeanine Vorland and DU’s Jon Schneider. The lake water was clear as champagne and the emergent and submergent vegetation was apparent everywhere one looked. Jeanine explained the last vegetation survey they had submerged vegetation, mainly wild celery, at 100 percent of the survey stations.

The duck use has increased as well with hunters seeing regular use by ducks and good use during migration days with a northwest wind.

The next recent DU project was Bear Lake, another famous waterfowl lake in southern MN. The Bear Lake project took ten years to complete, but the results have been well worth it (see aerial photograph at the bottom of the page). Bear Lake was in a similar condi-



Above: The shore of Geneva Lake shows the emergent vegetation. Even though it was a windy day, the lake surface was flat due to the thick beds of submergent vegetation reaching the surface.



Left: An aerial photograph of Geneva Lake in August of 2015 shows the beds of emergent aquatic vegetation. The lake water is clear and the submerged vegetation is visible as well.



Aerial view of Bear Lake showing beds of emergent vegetation on the back left and behind the point. State Line Lake in drawdown is seen in the bottom of the photo. Photo courtesy of Guy Zenner and Iowa DNR.





## Freeborn County Waterfowl Mecca (Continued)



This photograph, taken by DNR staff during their lake survey, shows a swarm of blue-winged teal getting up from the lake (photo courtesy of MnDNR).

(pun intended) with clear water and thick beds of vegetation being present (see DNR photographs to the right).

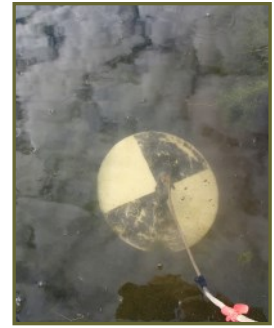
The most recent shallow lake enhancement project is the State Line Lake

project, the location of a DU Project Dedication this past summer (see photo to the right). Again, the old fixed-crest dam, which was in poor condition, was removed and a new water control structure installed. In addition, DU installed a high velocity fish barrier downstream of the structure, under a County road. Again, the ensuing drawdown has reset the lake's biology, resulting in clear water, beds of emergent and submergent vegetation, low fish numbers, and much more waterfowl use. People want to use the lake again, with kayakers and sail-boaters again using the lake because of the clear water, which was previously pea soup green.

In addition to the recent shallow lake enhancements, DU has also been busy restoring wetlands through its partnership with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources and the federal Natural Resource Conservation Service. DU's contract consultant, Chad Billat, based in Albert Lea, has

tion to Geneva Lake before for DU assisted DNR in removing the old dam and constructing a new water control structure with a fish barrier that allows DNR to drawdown the water level in the lake. Again, the results have been profound, with a 100 fold increase in aquatic vegetation and waterfowl after the 2013 drawdown of the lake. The DNR vegeta-

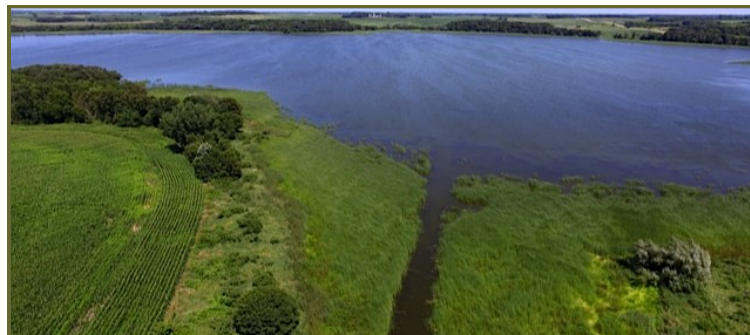
tion surveys Bear this out



***DU is changing the landscape of Minnesota by enhancing and restoring these shallow lakes.***



Above: Photograph of State Line Lake during the project dedication tour showed the clear water and beds of emergent vegetation near the carry-in access at the south end of the lake.



Left: State Line Lake is as blue as blue can be after the drawdown of the lake in 2014.





## Freeborn County Waterfowl Mecca (Continued)



This photo shows the restored wetlands on the Hagen Tract, now part of Goose Creek WPA.

been working with the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)/Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) funding to restore wetlands on private lands. Chad assisted with the tour of the area and showed the Hagen tract RIM/WRP easement area. The 130 acre easement was enrolled in 2002, with the first phase of restoration taking place in the fall of 2005. The



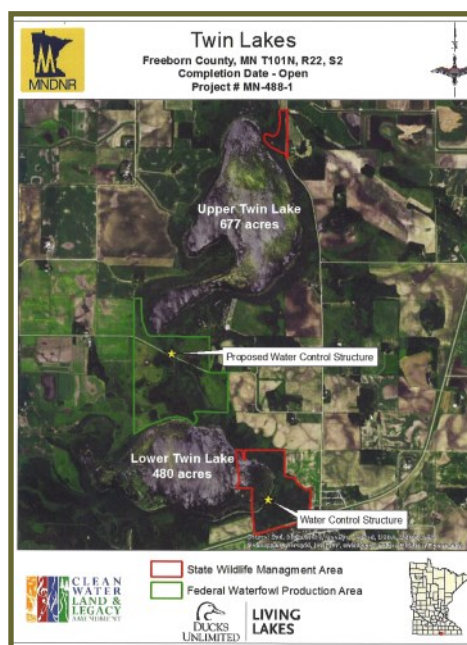
Above: The Hagen Tract before the wetlands were restored. Below: The Hagen Tract with the restored wetlands and grasslands.

restoration consisted of tile bocks, scrapes, and construction fo embankments and spillways. The second phase was completed in 2012, consisting of installation of a water control structure, high velocity pipe, scrapes, tile reroutes, more tile blocks, embankments, an embankment with a rodent barrier, spillways, and fill placement.

In addition to the above four projects, DU has provided encouragement and technical guidance to DNR on a possible water control structure and a velocity fish tube barrier for Upper and Lower Twin Lakes, which are one and one-half miles from Bear Lake. These lakes are in relatively good condition with fairly abundant sub-



merged vegetation, but could benefit by lowering the water levels some to enhance the emergent vegetation and reduce fish numbers. DNR is moving ahead with project design in cooperation with the Shell Rock River Watershed District and also the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which owns the land between the two lakes.



This 2015 aerial photograph of Freeborn Lake shows the how turbid and green the water has become and public use is limited. The hope is to bring back clear water so people can swim in and enjoy the lake as well as increase its use by waterfowl.



Finally, DNR and DU have another lake project on the radar, that being Freeborn Lake, in northwest Freeborn County. This lake suffers from very turbid water and very little emergent vegetation. DNR and DU had a public meeting last year and, although the project requires doing a large drawdown, the response had been favorable and DU will be adding another shallow lake enhancement to the Freeborn County Waterfowl Mecca.



This photo from a Freeborn County lake shows how good the duck hunting can be (Photo courtesy of Jeremy Griffith of Albert Lea).





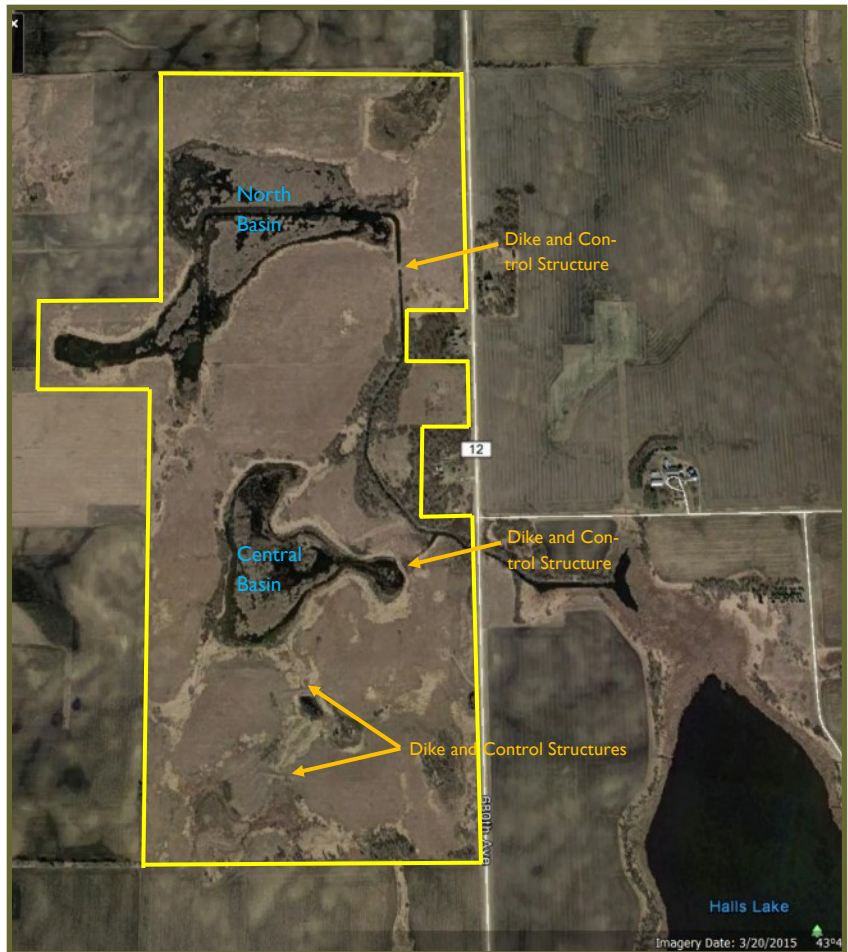
## Project Hall of Fame—Halls Lake WPA

Ducks Unlimited has been conserving habitat in Minnesota since 1985. There are literally hundreds of DU projects scattered across Minnesota. In fact, many of the water control structures on federal waterfowl production areas (WPAs) and state wildlife management areas (WMAs) were designed and built as Ducks Unlimited projects. This column is a regular feature devoted to describing some of these older projects.

The first Halls Lake WPA project was constructed in 1986 and consisted of three water control structures for three basins totaling 43 acres. Halls Lake WPA is located in Freeborn County, six miles northwest of Albert Lea. Ducks Unlimited worked with Rogness Brothers Excavating on the project. Total construction costs included \$55,950 for dike construction and three 48" corrugated metal pipe (CMP) risers and 24" discharge pipes. A second wetland restoration was completed in 1994. Again, Rogness Brothers was the contractor and the construction involved an embankment totaling 1,023 cubic yards of material and a similar CMP structure to the central basin project. The north basin covers 54.5 surface acres of marsh at full service level and cost \$33,955, which DU paid in full.

The primary objective of the projects was to create brooding and pairing habitat by restoring the semi-permanent wetlands. Variable level water control structures were installed to provide for management of water levels in the basins. The completed Halls Lake WPA provides great nesting habitat for waterfowl returning to MN due to the restoration of these small prairie pothole marshes. When visited in the fall of 2015, the WPA had great vegetation and had several wood ducks and mallards using it.

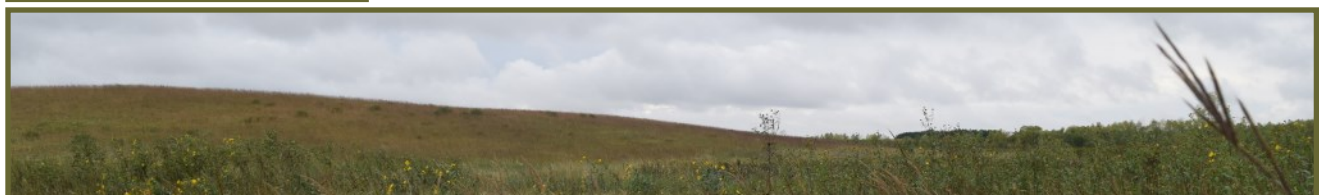
Below: The Halls Lake WPA in September 2015, showing the lush grassland surrounding the restored wetland basins.



Above: Photo of the water control structure on the 29 acre central basin.

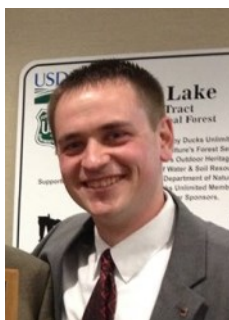


The north basin had good emergent vegetation for nesting and brood rearing.





## Scott (Scottie) Anderson Named Regional Director of the Year



Ducks Unlimited (DU) regional director Scott Anderson was awarded the 2014-15 Regional Director of the Year award for his outstanding efforts as a staff member of Region 3, an area that encompasses Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan.

"I was very grateful to be recognized with this award, but it is something I can't take all credit for," Anderson said. "The volunteers in my region deserve the honor of this award as well. All of their hard work and efforts played a big role in our success; it's a whole team effort."

Anderson, a resident of Bemidji, Minn., covers northern Minnesota and works with volunteer committees in this area hosting

fundraisers for the 78-year-old conservation organization. The events in his region raised more than \$910,000 for DU's conservation mission in the fiscal year that ended June 30.

"All of DU's regional directors spend countless hours on the road coordinating events across the nation, and there's no doubt they help drive the success of the organization," said David Schuessler, DU's national director of event fundraising. "Volunteers are the cornerstone of DU's fundraising success, and it takes some very special people to help guide those volunteers. My hat's off to each and every one of our regional directors for their tireless efforts over the past year."

Here is Scottie working the Chevy Truck giveaway at the recent MN DU State Convention.



## Volunteer Spotlight—Tom Cole

Tom Cole has been a DU volunteer for over 14 years with the Steele County DU chapter. Not only is Tom a key part of the Steele County chapters success (Steele County received the national silver award this year), but Tom is willing to travel and do anything it takes to make other DU events in Minnesota successful. Tom's peers say whenever they ask Tom to do something it always gets done and done on time. He is easy to talk to and helpful and has a great positive attitude. Its people like Tom that make DU's fundraising efforts so successful. In 2015, Tom became a Zone Chairman for the southern region working with other chapter volunteers and his Regional Director on additional events. In his role as zone chair, he helped restart the Owatonna Sponsor event. Tom also realizes the importance that DU life sponsors have to delivering our conservation mission in Minnesota and on the breeding grounds and this is a big reason why he became a life sponsor of Ducks Unlimited.

You will rarely find Tom at DU events without his better half Sandy who is also a big asset for Ducks Unlimited fundraising events. Tom is the project manager at a family run business in Owatonna: Coles Electric Inc. Tom spends his spare time hunting deer, waterfowl and upland and enjoys the preparation that each brings throughout the year. When you see Tom and Sandy at the next DU event, be sure to thank them for all they do for the ducks!

Tom Cole (left) and Regional Director Andrew Limmer on a successful goose hunt last fall near Rochester, MN.



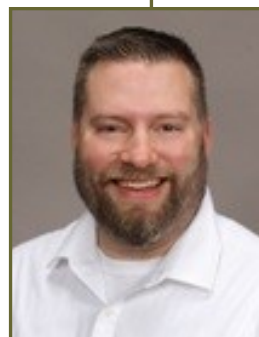
## MN DU Regional Reorganization

DU reorganized the fundraising regions in Minnesota last year starting July 1, 2015 and brought on three new RDs to replace retiring and promoted RDs. The new map and a short bio is provided below so you can place a name with a face.

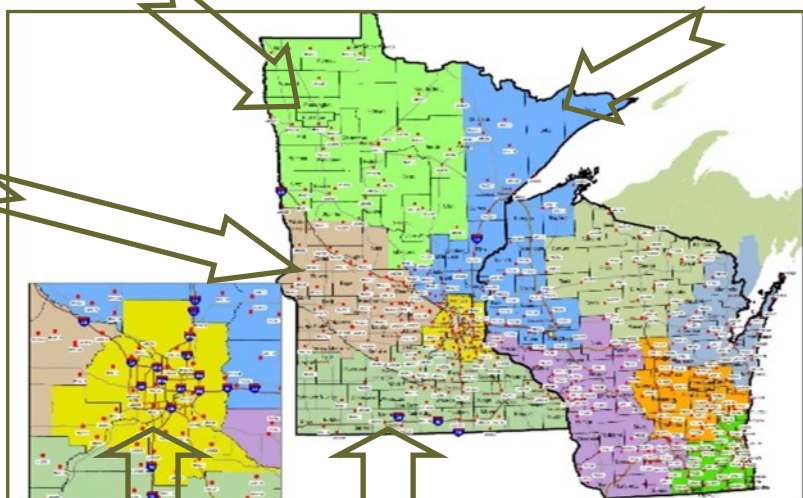
Everybody knows Scott (Scottie) Anderson, the Senior Regional Director for the Northern Minnesota region. Scottie has been an RD for over 10 years. He took on the job soon after he graduated from Drake University. He has successfully worked to get the MN DU Calendar Program off the ground and expanded to its current form. He was named RD of the Year (see Article on Page 11) for DU's Region 3, which includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Scottie lives just outside of Bemidji, where he is based.



Patrick Patterson is the new Regional Director for Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin. Born and raised in southern Minnesota, duck hunting and Ducks Unlimited have always been important parts of Patrick's life, so much so it even earned him the nickname "Duck Man". Before becoming a Regional Director, Patrick was a volunteer and senior volunteer for nearly 8 years with John Marks in the south metro. He now calls Duluth home, with his wife, Emily, and black lab, Quinn.



Kyle Momsen is our newest Regional Director, taking on the RD position for the new West Central Region. Born and raised in Austin, Kyle's father and grandfather introduced him to DU, conservation, and duck hunting. After being a volunteer and zone chair in the southeast, he realized his true calling to work for DU. He considers himself fortunate to be an RD and looks forward to helping MN DU move toward great things. He will be moving to Alexandria with his wife Nicole and son Ian.



John Marks is the Regional Director for the new Metro Region. He is originally from Glenwood, Minnesota, but worked all over the United States as a manager for Sportmen's Warehouse. He has been instrumental in starting the MN DU Special Events Program, which includes the Northwest Sports Show DU Room. He lives in Cottage Grove, with his wife, Maren, and son August.



Andrew Limmer is the new Regional Director for the new South Region. Andrew grew up in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He was the founder of the Milwaukee School of Engineering DU Chapter, one of the first DU collegiate chapters. He graduated from there in 2012, with a degree in Conservation and Environmental Science. He was also a DU zone chair in Wisconsin. Andrew is well known in DU for being on stage during the DU's 75th Celebration Convention talking about his DU collegiate experience. He is based out of Rochester, where he lives with his beautiful wife Taylor and dog Austin.





## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2016 MN DU STATE CONVENTION



Julie Blackburn of the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council talked about the progress the LSHOC and the Outdoor Heritage Fund has made. She also offered to become a new DU member.

*The State Convention was held February 12 and 13, 2106 at the Willmar Convention Center.*



New DU Biologist for Minnesota, John Lindstrom, introduces himself during the conservation talks on Saturday.



Dr. David Howerter of DU's Institute of Wetland Waterfowl Research (IWRR) was the keynote speaker at the Annual Banquet. He gave an update on work on Delta Marsh and scaup research.



Tracy Busswitz, the Annual Banquet auctioneer, lead a lively auction which raised almost \$10,000 for Ducks Unlimited.



Peter Ringle from St. Cloud raises his hand for a high five with RD Scottie Anderson after the key fob he held lit up the new Chevy truck. While MC Dick Burch gets ready to shake Peter's hand.



Girls with guns—some of the young women from the collegiate chapters help RVC Joe Schlager (left) with handing out the raffle prizes including several guns.



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Cattails



**You are Ducks Unlimited**

***Ducks Unlimited is the world's largest non-profit organization dedicated to conserving North America's continually disappearing waterfowl habitats. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 12 million acres, thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent. Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.***



**This is something you don't see at most DU banquets, a mink teddy bear. Yes, it is real mink. Committee assistant, Kari Gaudette, is walking it around during the live auction at the Ottertail Chapter event in January of this year. The event is held at the Otter Club, of course, right on State Hwy 78 in Ottertail, MN. The teddy bear went for \$225.**



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