



80 Years of Conservation

# DU CONSERVATION REPORT 2017

## (MONTANA)



The Montana Ducks Unlimited team raises the bar on conservation delivery. In FY17, DU conserved 42,503 acres of wetlands and associated uplands and provided technical assistance on 5,825 acres across the state. Innovative partnerships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), private landowners and DU volunteers and donors contribute to delivery of quality projects that provide critical habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife species across this important landscape. DU's work with the FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFWP) restored 29,587 acres.

Ducks Unlimited's Revolving Habitat Program (RHP) protects habitat and provides valuable demonstration projects for local landowners pursuing conservation easements. DU purchased

the 1,215-acre Schurr Ranch in Phillips County in March 2016 and is developing protection, restoration and grazing plans for the property. DU and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) secured a perpetual easement on the Flatt property in Phillips County to protect wildlife habitat and ensure public access for hunting and other recreation. DU sold the 1,200-acre Matulka property in Phillips County to a local ranching family in November.

Along with the FWS PFWP and local ranchers, DU is improving RHP lands by restoring wetland basins and installing stock water facilities and fencing to improve range conditions for wildlife and livestock. DU leases RHP lands for managed grazing to local ranchers, and all RHP properties are enrolled in the MFWP Block Management Program to provide hunting access.

Collaborative efforts between DU and the FWS to educate landowners about easement opportunities are paying big dividends for the wildlife and ranching communities in Montana's Hi-Line. In FY17, FWS easements were completed with ten landowners to permanently protect 10,696 acres of the best of Montana's prairie pothole habitat. These easements allow ranchers to operate while keeping grasslands and wetlands intact.

DU's partnership with NRCS entered its sixth year of delivering habitat protection and restoration projects through a variety of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs including the Wetland Reserve Easement and the Agricultural Land Easement programs. During the past 12 months, DU and

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## MAJOR DONORS ERNIE AND RENEE LUNDBERG



Ernie and Renee Lundberg are living a life committed to the outdoors and wildlife habitat conservation. They are both retired U.S. Forest Service employees who spent their careers supporting the Forest Service's mission to sustain the nation's forests and grasslands. Today they are supporting Ducks Unlimited as major donors and volunteers. Renee is the state treasurer and Ernie is a district chair. Together, they chair the local Blackfoot River DU Chapter in Lincoln, Montana, and help with other events in Helena, Townsend and Great Falls.

"We don't have a lot of duck hunting opportunities in Lincoln but it is a hunting community," said Renee. "When we moved here and started the DU chapter we thought it would be a great thing to bring the community together."

"We became involved with DU in the early 90's because we wanted to improve habitat in our corner of the world," said Ernie. "Now all of our good friends are DU people, and we enjoy coming together for a good cause."

The couple supports the Greenwing events in their area and dedicate their time to other volunteer needs in the community. Ernie volunteers for the ambulance and fire department, while they both serve on the park board and are members of the Lincoln Sportsman's Club. Renee is the treasurer for the local community hall that relies completely on donations and volunteer time.

## HELENA DU LICENSE AUCTION RAISES MONEY FOR MOOSE HABITAT INITIATIVE

Montana's moose habitat conservation initiative will get more funds, thanks to the winning bid of \$30,000 at the Helena 2017 Ducks Unlimited event. The Helena chapter auctioned the rare Shiras moose license during its annual dinner in March. Proceeds from the license sale went to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' (MFWP) moose program.

"The conservation dollars that benefit moose also positively affect waterfowl and other wildlife," said Steve Christian, an organizer of the event. "We want to thank the people who participated and our buyer who is making a major contribution to Montana wildlife."

Ducks Unlimited has won the right to auction off the Shiras moose license from MFWP since 2015 and is applying to have the honor again in 2018. The Helena DU chapter will host the auction at its yearly fundraising dinner. Montana Ducks Unlimited is reimbursed for auction advertising expenses. In 2015 the license went for \$60,000 and in 2016 the license went for \$32,500.



*Crew at the Helena chapter event. From left to right; Regional Director Barry Allen, Area Chair Steve Christian, Biologist Abby Dresser, Director of Development Chris Hildebrandt, District Chair Ernie Lundberg and Manager of Conservation Programs Bob Sanders.*

## DU TV FEATURES MONTANA



*Volunteers release banded scaup on Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge*

Premiering in July, DU TV will feature the landscapes of Montana and the talents of DU Manager of Conservation Programs in Montana Bob Sanders and Biologist Abby Dresser. The DU TV crew filmed portions of the annual Band a Duck, Catch a Trout (BADCAT) event and some hunting adventures.

Attendees of the BADCAT event participate in the lesser scaup research being conducted at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Starting out in canoes and kayaks, they head out in the two-mile wide marsh to herd the flightless females and ducklings into a collection pen, where they are gently loaded into transportation boxes and taken back to shore. The volunteers are trained on how to handle the ducks and take various measurements for data collection as part of the research. The ducks are then banded and released back into the wetland.

Biologists at the NWR have been researching lesser scaup since 2005 and hope to find answers to why this popular diving duck population has been slow to recover, unlike other duck species. The study is the premier lesser scaup breeding research effort in the nation, in part because the NWR produces the most scaup of anywhere in the lower 48, giving the study an enormous amount of data on the species.

The two shows also highlight the importance of the waterfowl breeding areas in Montana and a great opening day hunt with DU staff. DU TV airs four times a week on the Pursuit Channel and at [www.ducks.org/dutv](http://www.ducks.org/dutv).

## MEET YOUR NEW STAFF

Adam McDaniel joined Ducks Unlimited in February 2017 to work in a partnership position with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on the Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE). Adam's region includes 13 counties and the north-central section of the state. Adam has already assisted with several WRE projects conserving nearly 8,500 acres of wetland habitat.

Adam is from Byron, Minnesota, where he grew up hunting, fishing, and learning the importance of wildlife habitat conservation and the role it plays on sustaining wildlife populations. Adam attended the University of North Dakota where he earned his bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. He has worked throughout the United States and Canada on various wildlife, fisheries and habitat projects. Adam is based in Great Falls where he enjoys fishing the river, hiking, and hunting.



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partners secured 2,220 acres of permanent and term protection agreements and provided technical assistance on 5,825 acres of private lands. In early 2017, DU hired Adam McDaniel to assist with USDA program deliveries across the Hi-Line.

During this legislative session, DU partnered with several conservation groups to form the Montana Sporting Coalition, a collaborative effort to lobby legislators for pro-conservation legislation. The efforts of this group resulted in bills that provide funding for MFWP.

## DU EDUCATES MONTANA LANDOWNERS

Ducks Unlimited staff and partners held workshops in 2016 in Montana to inform landowners about conservation easement options for expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres.

“This year, we will see 391,000 acres of CRP expire in Montana with no option for reenrollment. Landowners want to keep their land in conservation programs that benefit wildlife and their operations,” said Abby Dresser, DU biologist in Montana.

Establishing conservation easements and enrolling in the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) can be daunting. Dresser, Pheasants Forever biologists, NRCS staff and other partners help landowners navigate the paperwork and nuances of easement requirements to help them determine and enroll in the programs.

“There has never been a time in Montana where landowners have had so many options when it comes to conservation easements,” said Glenn Marx, executive director of the Montana Association of Land Trusts. “There is a diversity of groups including federal and non-profit organizations with opportunities for landowners.”

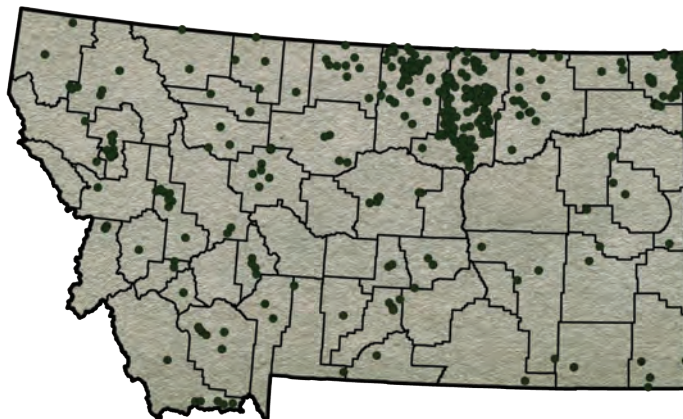
Attendance at the workshops ranged from 6 to 25 producers, with real estate and bank professionals attending to learn about conservation easements. Partners included Montana Association of Land Trusts, Montana Land Reliance, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, Prickly Pear Land Trust, Bitter Root Land Trust, Five Valleys Land Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

### ducks unlimited MT PROJECTS 1984-PRESENT

#### Accomplishments

66,623 acres restored and enhanced

83,749 acres protected



● Completed projects  
Project points may represent more than one project.

## MONTANA STATE CONTACTS:

### For information on DU’s conservation programs:

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### For information on event fundraising:

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### *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.