

# DU CONSERVATION REPORT

*Nebraska*  
2018

*John Denton, Manager of Conservation Programs in Nebraska*

Ducks Unlimited accomplished some major conservation milestones in 2017, including more land for two waterfowl production areas. DU also transferred to Nebraska Game and Parks the final 227-acres Tom Hastings gifted to DU that will complete the 1,225-acre Niobrara Confluence Wildlife Management Area. In total, 29 projects were completed with 1,835 acres protected and 5,585 enhanced or protected during the calendar year.

We are constantly adding new projects, with projects in progress never dropping below 88 during the past four years. We work in all wetland complexes statewide. Currently, we have 103 projects, ranging from preliminary inspection to nearly completed, and additional projects in multiple locations, such as our Rainwater Basin Enhancement Project. Here is a snapshot of our workload, illustrating DU's statewide efforts:

Twelve Missouri River and Eastern Nebraska projects in Knox, Washington, Cedar, Dixon, Dodge, Nemaha, Lancaster, Saunders, Stanton and Sarpy counties.

Thirty-five Platte River projects in Garden, Keith, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Dawson, Dodge, Hall, Hamilton, Lincoln and Phelps counties, and one multi-county project.

Forty Rainwater Basin projects in Butler, Hamilton, Clay, Polk, Fillmore, Phelps, Franklin, Kearney, Seward and York counties, and four multi-county projects.

Sixteen Sandhills, Loup Rivers and Southwestern Playas projects in Cherry, Blaine, Custer, Loup, Nance, Chase, Keith, and Valley counties, and three multi-county projects.

These projects occur in 46 of the 93 counties in Nebraska, so chances are, we are working to conserve wetlands near you for the benefit of wildlife and clean water.





CARGILL HELPS EMPLOYEES BECOME DU MAJOR SPONSORS AND MAKES \$120,000 DONATION

Cargill’s Blair, Nebraska plant is helping its employees increase their Ducks Unlimited gifts. The company matches staff charitable donations by 50 percent, up to \$1,000 per year. Many employees have made use of the match, including eight who became major sponsors, with total contributions of more than \$10,000.

“Ducks Unlimited’s work is a good fit for Cargill’s goals to be green,” said Jason Christiansen, Cargill Feed Segment supply and demand operations manager. “What DU is doing to purify and protect ground water, is one of things Cargill focuses on.”



Cargill Blair plant staff volunteer with local DU chapter

Cargill recently donated \$120,000 to Ducks Unlimited’s Nebraska work to improve wetland habitat for the spring and fall migrations.

“Cargill’s direct support of DU’s conservation programs, coupled with the company matching employees’ personal gifts and volunteer time, makes a huge impact on DU’s ability to deliver conservation programs,” said Terry Kostinec, DU director of development for Nebraska and South Dakota. “Our organization has matched the gifts from Cargill and their employees many times over with state and federal funding.”

Christiansen says many staff members have a personal connection to Ducks Unlimited, with 15 of them serving on the local DU committee in Burt/ Washington County.

The match influenced the Blair local chapter’s national ranking, Christiansen said. With 95 Bronze Sponsors, and Cargill’s support, the chapter will soon celebrate its third year on the Ducks Unlimited President’s Elite list of chapters raising more than \$100,000 a year.

“That’s remarkable for a town of about 8,000 people,” he said.

DU AND PARTNERS TO CONSERVE 13,000 ACRES OF MIGRATION HABITAT

Ducks Unlimited and partners are expanding restoration work in the bottleneck of the Central Flyway migration corridor in central Nebraska.

A new North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant will help the partners protect, restore or enhance more than 13,000 acres of wetland habitat. This grant extends northward with conservation work to include the Platte River and Loup River Sandhills.

“More than 80 percent of Rainwater Basin wetlands have been lost,” said John Denton, DU manager of conservation programs for Nebraska. “Woody and other invasive species are choking shallow wetland areas along the Platte and Loup rivers. Restoration on the remaining wetlands will be critical to the millions of spring migrating birds.” Grant projects include the purchase and protection of 120 acres crucial to the management of a

publicly owned Rainwater Basin wetland. Almost 40 percent of the land being conserved is open to the public. The grant will also support a Rainwater Basin Joint Venture (RWBJV) and Ducks Unlimited vegetation control program that removes dense stands of accumulated plants on both private and public land.

The RWB Watershed Restoration Project will restore several U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service waterfowl production areas and wildlife management areas by filling unused irrigation pits.

Matching funds are provided by DU, RWBJV, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Douglas Frey and the Platte Valley Weed Management Area.

NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST VITAL TO DU PROJECTS

Without the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET), Ducks Unlimited would only have completed a fraction of its 312 projects on over 107,000 Nebraska acres.

“NET funding was part of more than 90 percent of the projects,” said John Denton, DU manager of conservation for Nebraska. “We encourage Nebraskans to support this important conservation partner.”

In the last year, NET awarded DU and partners almost \$746,000 in grants for seven restoration projects on crucial migration habitats. Matching federal grants at least doubled funds for work along the Lower Platte River, North Platte River, Loup Rivers, Sandhills and Rainwater Basin.

In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited will restore 890 acres of Asian carp-infested wetlands at the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge. Carp destroy wetland vegetation, leaving no bird forage.

The Loup River Public Wetland Project, in partnership with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, will restore wetlands on eight wildlife management areas. DU will also restore wetlands along the North Platte River in Scotts Bluff County and the Lower Platte River in Dodge County. We will restore two DU revolving tracts in the Rainwater Basin.

NET, funded by the Nebraska Lottery, was established in 1992 to conserve, enhance and restore Nebraska’s natural environments.



NANCY JENSEN  
PROJECT COORDINATOR

Nancy Jensen describes working with Ducks Unlimited’s Nebraska team as “pure pleasure.” The praise is even more exceptional when you know it comes from the DU project coordinator who helps the team comply with rules and regulations for more than 50 funding sources.

“This is an outstanding team of bright and energetic people with a remarkable passion

for conservation,” Jensen said. “Not a day goes by that one of them doesn’t make me smile.”

John Denton, DU’s Nebraska conservation manager, says Jensen helps him navigate unusual situations that can arise with dozens of ongoing projects. Jensen handles all project grant documentation, invoicing and contracts.

“Without Nancy, our work would come to a grinding halt in the four states she oversees, especially Nebraska,” Denton said. “Her organizational skills are unparalleled and her generous and positive attitude betters everyone who works with her.”

Jensen says the team’s grant writing skills rely on more than science. “As much as we are a science-based organization, there is a fascinating artistic element to our conservation work. To read a NAWCA grant proposal, for example, and see the landscape come together with multiple projects is a thing of beauty,” she said.



## ROUNDING OUT RAINWATER BASIN WETLANDS

Duck Unlimited purchased the final “roundouts” to Cottonwood Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) in Phelps County and Smith WPA in Clay County. DU’s goal in the Rainwater Basin is to have the entire playa footprint under public ownership, so it can be managed to its full potential.

The wetlands will soon be under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service control. Prior to this, service employees had to be cautious when

managing WPA wetland water levels to prevent flooding of neighboring crop fields.

At Smith WPA, DU has purchased three roundouts over the past decade, proving we can accomplish DU’s mission to benefit this important wetland habitat. These properties will now be open to the public.

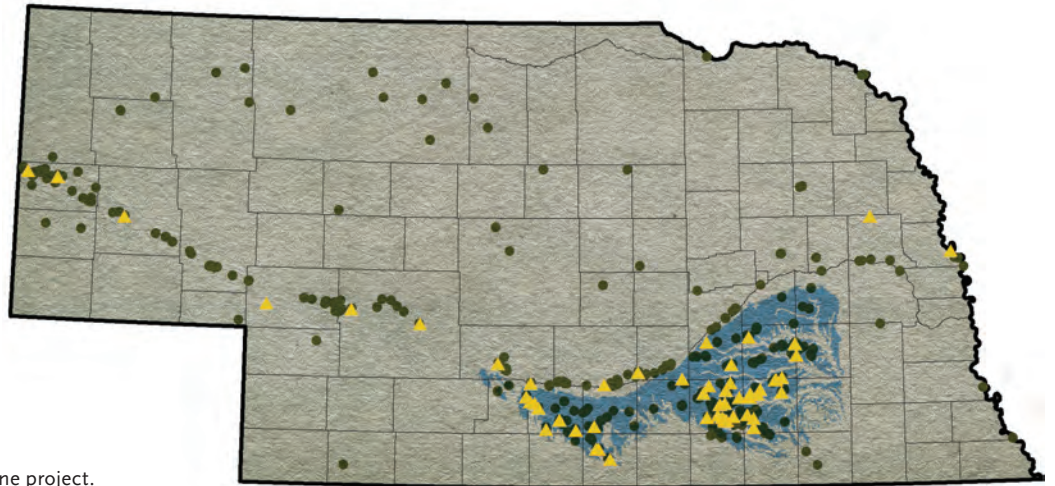
### ducks unlimited NE PROJECTS 1984-2017

#### Accomplishments\*

319 projects completed  
80,713 conserved (unique acres)  
114,419 total acres impacted acres

- Completed projects: 1984-2016
- ▲ 2017 Completed projects
- Rainwater Basin

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.



\*Based on numbers available 01/01/18

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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.