

# STATE CONSERVATION REPORT

NORTH DAKOTA • 2019

In North Dakota, Ducks Unlimited is on pace to restore and enhance more than 15,000 acres of grasslands and wetlands in 2019. With expanded partnerships and accelerated efforts, 2018 was another tremendous year for protection, restoration and enhancement of waterfowl habitat. The conservation easement program DU delivers with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) protected 26,938 acres of grasslands and 18,398 of wetlands. Since the start of this partnership, DU and FWS have protected more than one million acres in the Dakotas and Montana.

With thousands of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres expiring and reduced acres available, landowners interested in grass-based conservation programs are finding limited options. DU biologists are meeting with farmers and ranchers to discuss conservation alternatives.

By using a working lands approach, Ducks Unlimited and our partners developed integrated

programs that work for landowners and breeding waterfowl. These strategies include converting expiring CRP lands into functioning grazing systems and marginal cropland into working pasture. Agriculture specialists and DU biologists have worked with more than 500 landowners in the Prairie Pothole Region of North Dakota, conserving more than 100,000 acres.

Additional work is being done to enhance public grazing land with fencing and water developments and integrate cover crops

and livestock into row crop agriculture to increase rest rotations on adjacent pasture while improving soil health on cropland.

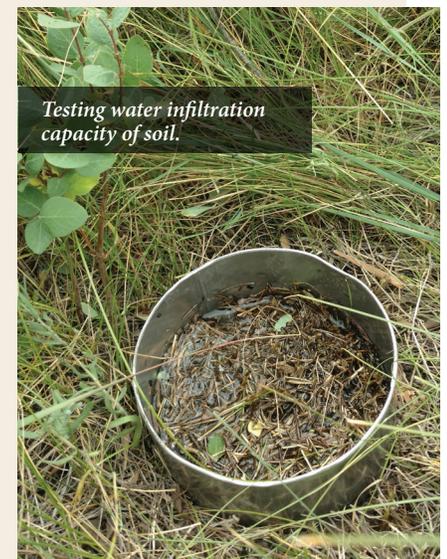
These working lands programs increase the productivity of the land, leading to increased resiliency and profitability of agricultural operations, while improving habitat quality for breeding waterfowl and other prairie-dependent species.

- Jonas Davis  
Manager of Conservation Programs for North Dakota

## DU demonstrates the importance of water infiltration

Ducks Unlimited is helping North Dakota ranchers test the health of their soils using a simple water infiltration tool. DU biologists spend time in the field talking with ranchers about the significance of water infiltration and provide them with tools to perform the tests on their land.

“We are seeing storms that drop increasing amounts of moisture in shorter periods of time,” said DU Conservation Programs Biologist Dane Buysse. “If our soils do not have the capacity to infiltrate high amounts of water in short periods of time, the water will only go one way – downhill – and carry sediment and nutrients with it. Organic matter and



▼  
soil structure are the keys to retaining moisture during high rainfall. By installing rotational grazing infrastructure and planning grazing periods, we can achieve both.”

Slowing water down reduces sedimentation into wetlands, reduces the potential for flooding and provides plants with soil moisture during drought periods.

“Rotating cattle between pastures provides critical recovery time for grass, which allows for deeper root growth, better forage production and improved nesting cover for waterfowl,” Buysse said.

Buysse manages DU’s Grasslands Enhancement Pilot Project (GEPP), which provides cost-share to implement rotational grazing infrastructure. The program focuses on public and state school trust land in the Bakken oil field with a goal to enhance 4,000 acres. Because these practices are beneficial for sustainable ranching and wildlife populations, ranchers voluntarily work with Ducks Unlimited biologists to install quality water infrastructure, fencing and power.

The GEPP was funded in part by a grant from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund. The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust and Ducks Unlimited were the grant sponsors.



Eric Lindstrom and Steve M. Scheel

## Scheels attains DU Legacy Sponsor status

Scheels has long partnered with outdoor and conservation groups like Ducks Unlimited. This support helps improve the lives of Scheels’ customers and employees and is a natural fit for one of the country’s most successful sporting goods companies.

“These organizations are working hard to protect the great outdoors and all the opportunities they offer to everyone, and

Ducks Unlimited is a leader in these efforts,” said Scheels CEO Steve M. Scheel. “Many of Scheels’ 6,500 associates enjoy the great outdoors, so this investment is essential for their business and passions.”

Scheels, based in Fargo, North Dakota, has long been a staunch supporter of Ducks Unlimited. Over the past five years, the company attained Legacy Sponsorship status through corporate gifts and its support of DU banquets in communities that are home to Scheels stores.

“We’re proud to partner with Ducks Unlimited, particularly in the Prairie Pothole Region, which is where Scheels was started,” Steve said. “Our partnership with DU is working to protect wetlands, which are vital to North American waterfowl populations, clean water and outdoor recreation.”

Scheels was founded in 1902 when Steve’s great-great grandfather, Frederick A. Scheel, used \$300 earned from his first potato harvest as a down payment on a small hardware and general merchandise store in Sabin, Minnesota. Over the ensuing 116 years, Scheels has expanded to 27 stores in 12 states and will open its 28th store location in the Dallas, Texas area in 2020.

“We’re grateful for Scheels’ tremendous commitment to conservation and community leadership,” said Eric Lindstrom, DU’s managing director of development for the Great Plains Region. “Steve is also a passionate waterfowler and DU Life Sponsor.”



The Larson Family: (left to right) Annika, Craig, Shelley, and Paige

## North Dakota-based bank and owners recognized for prairie conservation leadership

Craig and Shelley Larson and Starion Bank were honored recently by Ducks Unlimited for being strong community leaders and champions of prairie conservation. The North Dakota couple and the community bank were acknowledged

## Wayne Strand, Minot, North Dakota *Turning berries into wine for waterfowl*

Wayne Strand has supported Ducks Unlimited for more than 23 years and attended his first DU dinner in White Earth, North Dakota. Since then, he has volunteered his time and even donates some of his homemade wines to the Minot Chapter events. Wayne has a small hobby farm where he grows chokecherries and other ingredients for wine.

“I also donate wine to other wildlife organizations to auction at their banquets. At a Pheasants Forever banquet in Tioga, my wine went for \$300 a bottle,” Wayne said.

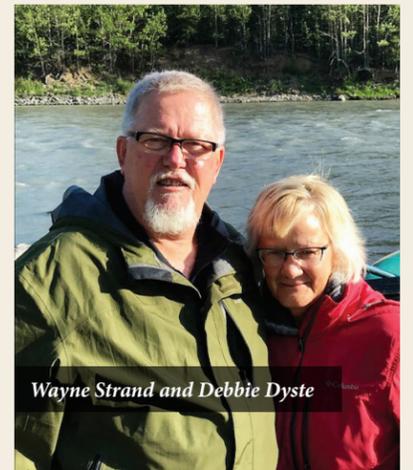
Wayne is a self-proclaimed rabid walleye fisherman and never misses an opportunity to be out on the water. He supports Ducks Unlimited because of the organization’s conservation principals and focus on duck breeding habitat.

*“If there is habitat, there is everything else,” Wayne said.*

Since retiring from the local school district, Wayne has devoted more time and support to helping DU fill the skies with waterfowl. He became a Grand Slam Life Sponsor and made a planned gift through his estate to become a Gold Member of the Feather Society. He also volunteers on the State Campaign Committee, which focuses on raising major gifts for DU’s mission through the Major Sponsor and Feather Society programs.

With his girlfriend, Debbie Dyste, Wayne attended the previous two DU National Conventions and is planning on going to Hawaii for the 82nd National Convention.

“I’ve made lasting friendships at the conventions and Debbie, who didn’t know much about DU initially, has been impressed with the people she has met,” Wayne said.



Wayne Strand and Debbie Dyste

*Wayne has developed friendships with people passionate about ducks and geese at the DU conventions, and he recommends any devoted DU supporter attend at least one.*

for their commitment to DU’s prairie conservation efforts at a special dinner and with two plaques at DU’s Coteau Ranch, northeast of Bismarck.

“The Larsons and Starion have provided significant support to our conservation work, with the Larsons becoming Legacy Sponsors and Starion a Gold Benefactor,” said Eric Lindstrom, managing director of development for DU’s Great Plains. “We are honored to

recognize and celebrate their tremendous contributions to North Dakota’s world-class outdoor resources, quality of life and communities.”

Starion Bank has been in the Larson family since 1969 when Craig’s parents, Frank and JoAndrea Larson, purchased the bank in Oakes, a small agricultural community in southeast North Dakota. Craig is now CEO and chairman of the board for Starion, which

has locations across North Dakota and Wisconsin. The Larsons also received Ducks Unlimited’s 2016 Wetland Conservation Achievement Award in the Private Citizen category.

“I sincerely appreciate Ducks Unlimited’s work in protecting and enhancing the prairie landscape, which is North America’s duck factory,” Craig Larson said. “Habitat will always be the critical factor for

not just waterfowl but all the wildlife species that call the prairie home.”

“The Larsons are strong conservation advocates and have carried out this passion in their personal and professional lives,” Lindstrom said. “We are thankful for their and Starion’s dedication and continued partnership.”

## DU expands CCLIP in 2019

DU's Cover Crop and Livestock Integration Project (CCLIP) completed its pilot year and is moving into phase two. This phase expands the focus area from a few counties in southeast North Dakota to 37 counties that encompass the Prairie Pothole Region in the state. The North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund (NDOHF) recently fully funded the project by awarding DU a \$1.25 million grant.

"With CCLIP, we are working with many people who were previously unaware of DU's voluntary conservation programs," said Tanner Gue, DU regional biologist.

In summer of 2017, the NDOHF awarded DU \$620,000 that funded the startup of CCLIP. With those funds DU completed

14 projects that enhanced more than 3,500 acres of grassland, 3,500 acres of cropland, and 500 acres of wetlands. Twelve additional projects are pending from this initial effort.

"One of our goals with this program is to reduce some of the economic pressures producers feel to drain small, yet significant wetlands that are imbedded in croplands," Gue said.

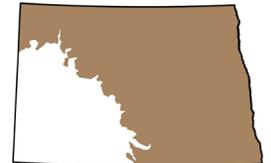
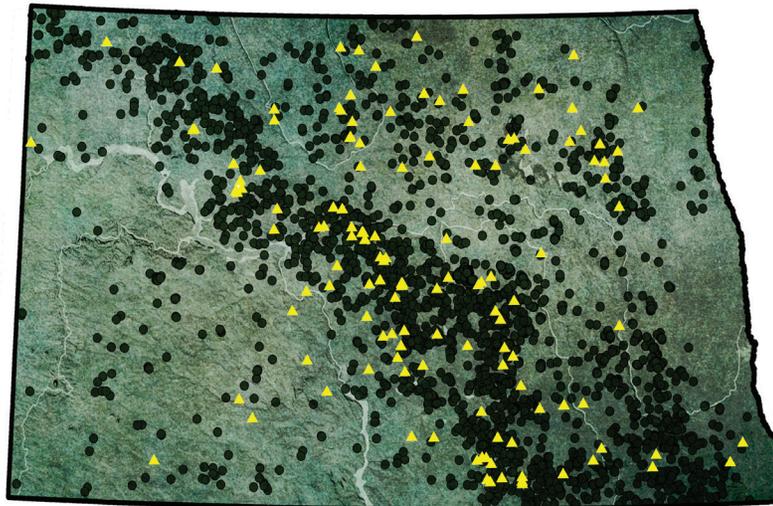
CCLIP assumes some of the financial risk by cost sharing 60 percent of the expenses for adding grazing infrastructure and purchasing cover crop seed. This assistance gives landowners the tools to prove to themselves these practices work for their operational goals.

The regenerative agricultural practices promoted by CCLIP restore organic matter to the soil, reduce soil compaction and increase water infiltration. Maintaining livestock on the landscape allows recovery time on perennial pastures and the five-year contract protects small wetlands that are important for breeding waterfowl. All these practices result in more productive cropland, healthier soil, increased flood protection, increased water quality and improved waterfowl habitat.

### ducks unlimited ND PROJECTS 1984-2018

- Completed projects
- ▲ 2018 Completed projects

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.



**Prairie Pothole Region**  
The Prairie Pothole Region is a lush ecosystem of wetlands and grasslands and provides highly productive waterfowl nesting and breeding habitat.

## 2018 Accomplishments

62,034 acres protected, restored or enhanced • \$7,137,782 invested

### Major Sponsor information:

Chris Hildebrandt  
Dir. of Development - MT, ND, WY  
childebrandt@ducks.org • (406) 203-2503

### Event fundraising information:

Matt Shahan, State Chair, ND  
matt.shahan@gmail.com • (406) 396-7468

Terry Lassiter, Regional Director, ND  
tlassiter@ducks.org • (701) 890-5770

### Conservation program information:

Jonas Davis  
Mgr. of Conservation Programs, ND  
jdavis@ducks.org • (701) 355-3500

Great Plains Regional Office  
ducks.org/northdakota

2525 River Road  
Bismarck, ND • 58503-9011  
(701) 355-3500