Written by Kim Betton
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WASHINGTON, DC - Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today that the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved spending more than $3 million from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to protect an estimated 1,600 acres of waterfowl habitat on 3 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Commission also approved $23.5 million in federal funding for grants to conserve more than 139,000 acres of wetlands and associated habitats in Canada through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

“Protecting North America’s wetlands – which provide so many ecological, economic, and social benefits – is crucial,” said Salazar, who chairs the Commission. “Besides providing habitat for fish, wildlife, and a variety of plants, wetlands are nurseries for many saltwater and freshwater fish and shellfish of commercial and recreational importance, and they provide hunting, fishing and other wildlife viewing opportunities for millions of Americans.”

The NAWCA Standard Grants awarded today will support six Canadian projects to benefit ducks, geese, and other migratory birds on more than 139,000 acres in 12 provinces and territories. Partners will contribute more than $23.5 million in matching non-federal dollars toward these projects.
A presentation summarizing 45 projects that were previously approved for funding by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council under the NAWCA

U.S. Small Grants Program was given to the Commission. These grant awards total more than $3 million in federal funds. Partners will contribute more than $12 million in matching funds toward these projects, which will protect and enhance 26,050 acres of wetlands and associated habitats in 24 states from Maine to California.

Each year, the Commission pre-approves the total amount of funding to be distributed to Small Grants projects in the next fiscal year. Final project selection authority is delegated to the Council, which then reports its selections back to the Commission. For fiscal year 2011, the Commission authorized up to $5 million to fund projects under the Small Grants program.

Examples of projects funded with NAWCA Small Grants in fiscal year 2011 include:

Arkansas: Arkansas River Valley Wetlands Restoration Phase I

Grantee: Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
This project will restore two highly degraded bottomland hardwood forests totaling 1,412 acres within the Arkansas River Valley. Partners will restore a 411-acre bottomland hardwood forest block in the Galla Creek Wildlife Management Area in Pope County, and 1,001 acres of bottomland hardwood forest in the Nimrod Lloyd Millwood WMA in Yell County. This project will benefit species such as mallard, wood duck, prothonotary and Kentucky warblers, and American woodcock.

California: Grasslands Wetland Enhancement
Grantee: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
This grant project will enhance 397 previously restored acres and an additional 123 acres of seasonal wetlands by installing a water delivery pipeline that will allow habitat managers to independently flood certain wetlands while conserving water. Species that use this habitat include mallard, northern pintail, green-winged teal, great blue heron, great egret, black-crowned night heron, and marbled godwit.

Minnesota: Madrena WMA Addition
Grantee: Pheasants Forever, Inc.
The purpose of this project is to protect key wetland-grassland complexes and provide waterfowl and grassland birds with high-quality nesting cover. Pheasants Forever will acquire 160 acres and subsequently donate the property to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for enrollment in the DNR's Wildlife Management Area System. This area provides critical staging and migratory habitats for lesser scaup, canvasbacks, ring-necked ducks, and other waterfowl.

New Hampshire: Pawtuckaway River Greenway, Phase II
Grantee: Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire
This project will expand a block of conservation land along the Pawtuckaway River by acquiring and protecting a large, unfragmented parcel of land. Protecting this parcel will preserve important wetland resources; protect diverse habitat for waterfowl, wetland birds, and other migratory birds; and provide public access for outdoor recreation, including hiking, skiing, fishing, and hunting. These shallow marsh wetlands and associated uplands provide nesting, foraging, and migratory habitat for mallard and wood duck and migrating American woodcock, among other species.

Examples of projects funded with NAWCA Standard Grants in Canada in fiscal year 2011 include:

Canadian Prairie/Parkland and Western Boreal Habitat Program
Grantee: Ducks Unlimited Canada

This proposal is the next step in a multi-year commitment by Ducks Unlimited Canada to contribute to achieving the goals and objectives of the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture. This proposal will secure 122,951 acres, enhance 7,411 acres of wetland and associated upland habitat, and influence another 4,637,887 acres through extension activities.

NCC Quebec & Atlantic: Protecting Wetland and Upland Habitat, Eastern Habitat Joint Venture
Grantee: Nature Conservancy Canada
Project activities will focus on preserving important breeding and migratory habitat, staging and molting habitat, and wintering habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, grassland, and colonial bird species. Priority waterfowl species directly benefiting from these activities include American black duck, green-winged teal and Canada goose.

The Commission approved the purchase of wetland habitat that will be added to 6 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System to secure breeding, resting, and feeding habitat. These acquisitions are funded with proceeds from sales of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, otherwise known as the Federal
Duck Stamp. These acquisitions include:

NEW REFUGE BOUNDARY AND PRICE APPROVAL
Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Oregon - This is the first time that Nestucca Bay NWR is coming to the Commission. Proposal is for boundary approval of 3,435 acres containing a mix of fee and easement acquisitions with 54 owners. Price approval request is for 21 acres in fee from one owner.

BOUNDARY ADDITION AND PRICE APPROVAL
San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, Texas - Proposal is for boundary addition and price approval of 1,544 acres in fee from two owners.

PRICE APPROVAL
Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, West Virginia - Proposal is for price approval of 73 acres in fee from one owner.
For every dollar spent on Federal Duck Stamps, ninety-eight cents goes directly to purchase vital habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission oversees the use of Federal Duck Stamp funds for the purchase and lease of these wetland habitats for national wildlife refuges. To date, more than 5.3 million acres of wetlands have been purchased using more than $750 million in Duck Stamp revenue.
More information about the approved NAWCA grant programs and projects is available on the Web at: http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/index.shtm .

The Commission includes Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Mark Pryor of Arkansas, Representatives John Dingell of Michigan and Robert Wittman of Virginia, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, as well as state representatives serving as ex-officio members who vote on projects located within their respective states.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and

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