



WINGS AND WETLANDS INITIATIVE



..... **ANNUAL REPORT 2026**



OVERVIEW

DU FOCUSES ON THE LANDSCAPES MOST ESSENTIAL TO SUPPORTING WATERFOWL DURING EVERY STAGE OF THEIR ANNUAL LIFE CYCLE.

Ducks Unlimited’s **Wings and Wetlands Initiative** is a targeted, science-based effort to conserve the wetlands that support waterfowl throughout Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. As a critical part of the Pacific Flyway, the region’s wetlands play a vital role in sustaining waterfowl populations, supporting outdoor traditions, and providing benefits to both wildlife and people.

Through this Initiative, DU brings together habitat conservation, cutting-edge research, and strategic policy engagement to deliver conservation at the scale needed across the Flyway. From breeding and migration areas to wintering habitats throughout the Pacific Northwest, DU focuses on the landscapes most essential to supporting waterfowl during every stage of their annual life cycle.

The Wings and Wetlands Initiative combines on-the-ground restoration efforts with advanced scientific tools, including waterfowl tracking and real-time wetland monitoring, to inform effective conservation decisions. DU also collaborates with landowners, Tribal Nations, agencies, and conservation partners to advance policies and secure funding that support long-term conservation success.

The projects highlighted in this report demonstrate the value of a coordinated regional strategy to protect wetlands, sustain wildlife populations, and strengthen the future of the Pacific Flyway across Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.



► **PACK RIVER DELTA RESTORATION PROJECT PHASES I-II (ID)**



IDAHO

► **PACK RIVER DELTA RESTORATION PROJECT PHASE III - COMPLETION OF THREE NEW ISLANDS**

PACK RIVER DELTA PROJECT ADVANCES WETLAND CONSERVATION IN NORTHERN IDAHO

In partnership with Idaho Fish and Game, DU recently completed Phase III of the Pack River Delta Restoration Project on Lake Pend Oreille in northern Idaho. Building on restoration efforts that began in 2006, the project enhances habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife while supporting public recreation, including hunting and kayaking.

The Pack River Delta is part of the Pend Oreille Wildlife Management Area, which was established to mitigate habitat losses resulting from construction of Albeni Falls Dam. Before the dam, seasonal water level fluctuations created diverse wetlands and floodplain habitats that supported abundant wildlife. Altered water levels reduced many of these habitats, prompting long-term restoration efforts across the watershed.

Completed in March 2026, Phase III restored critical shallow-water wetland habitat by creating three new islands and surrounding wetlands in an area that had become dominated by deep water. Construction crews moved more than 67,000 cubic yards of material, placed nearly 9,000 tons of rock, and planted almost 16,000 willow stems. The \$1.5 million project will benefit migrating and wintering waterfowl, including the thousands of ducks, geese, and tundra swans that use Lake Pend Oreille each year.

WASHINGTON



BRADY WETLAND ENHANCEMENT IMPROVES HABITAT AND WATER MANAGEMENT

At the Brady Wetland within Washington's Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area, DU and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are enhancing 45 acres of wetland habitat to benefit waterfowl and other wildlife while improving long-term wetland management. The project includes constructing four habitat islands to increase habitat diversity for resident and migratory birds and replacing an aging, ineffective water control structure with modern infrastructure that enables more efficient water-level management. These improvements will expand wetland habitat, support moist-soil vegetation management, and enhance hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing opportunities for the public.



May 2026 - Before construction



July 2026 - During construction

WINCHESTER ENHANCEMENTS IMPROVE POPULAR HUNT AREA

DU and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are advancing a major infrastructure improvement project at the Winchester Regulated Access Area, one of the region's most popular public hunting areas. Planned enhancements include replacement of aging water-control structures, expansion of water delivery systems, and improvements to approximately 50 acres of seasonal wetland habitat. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2027.

COLVILLE NATIONAL FOREST FISH PASSAGE DESIGN PROJECT

DU partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to design aquatic organism passage improvements at five road-stream crossings in the Tonata Creek watershed within the Colville National Forest. The project addressed outdated culverts that can block fish and other aquatic species from accessing critical habitat. While stream passage work is outside DU's traditional project portfolio, the effort explored opportunities to improve connected riparian wetlands, floodplains, and other waterfowl habitats while helping restore aquatic ecosystem connectivity across the watershed.

OREGON

APRIL 2026 - DU AWARDED 4TH GENERATION RANCHER LARRY MAXWELL A WETLAND CONVERSATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR HIS DEDICATION TO RESTORING AND PROTECTING WETLANDS.

UPPER BAUER PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

The Upper Bauer Project in Oregon's Goose Lake Basin demonstrates how working lands can support both agriculture and wildlife. In partnership with fourth-generation rancher Larry Maxwell, DU restored 77 acres of wetland habitat, improved fish passage, and upgraded irrigation infrastructure along Bauer Creek, creating a more resilient stream system for waterfowl, native fish, and agricultural operations. The project builds on more than 20 years of conservation collaboration with Maxwell, whose stewardship efforts have helped restore and permanently protect more than 1,500 acres of wetlands in the Goose Lake Basin. In recognition of his leadership and commitment to conservation, Maxwell received Ducks Unlimited's Wetland Conservation Achievement Award.

MODERNIZING INFRASTRUCTURE AT RIGGS DAM

In 2026, DU secured funding through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's Focused Investment Partnership program to advance the Riggs Dam Replacement Project. The existing structure along Foley Slough is undersized, deteriorating, and lacks fish passage, creating erosion, water quality concerns, and management challenges. DU will replace the structure with a modern, fish-passable dam designed to improve water delivery, restore floodplain connectivity, and support up to 680 acres of wetland habitat. Construction is scheduled for fall 2026.





DU SCIENCE:

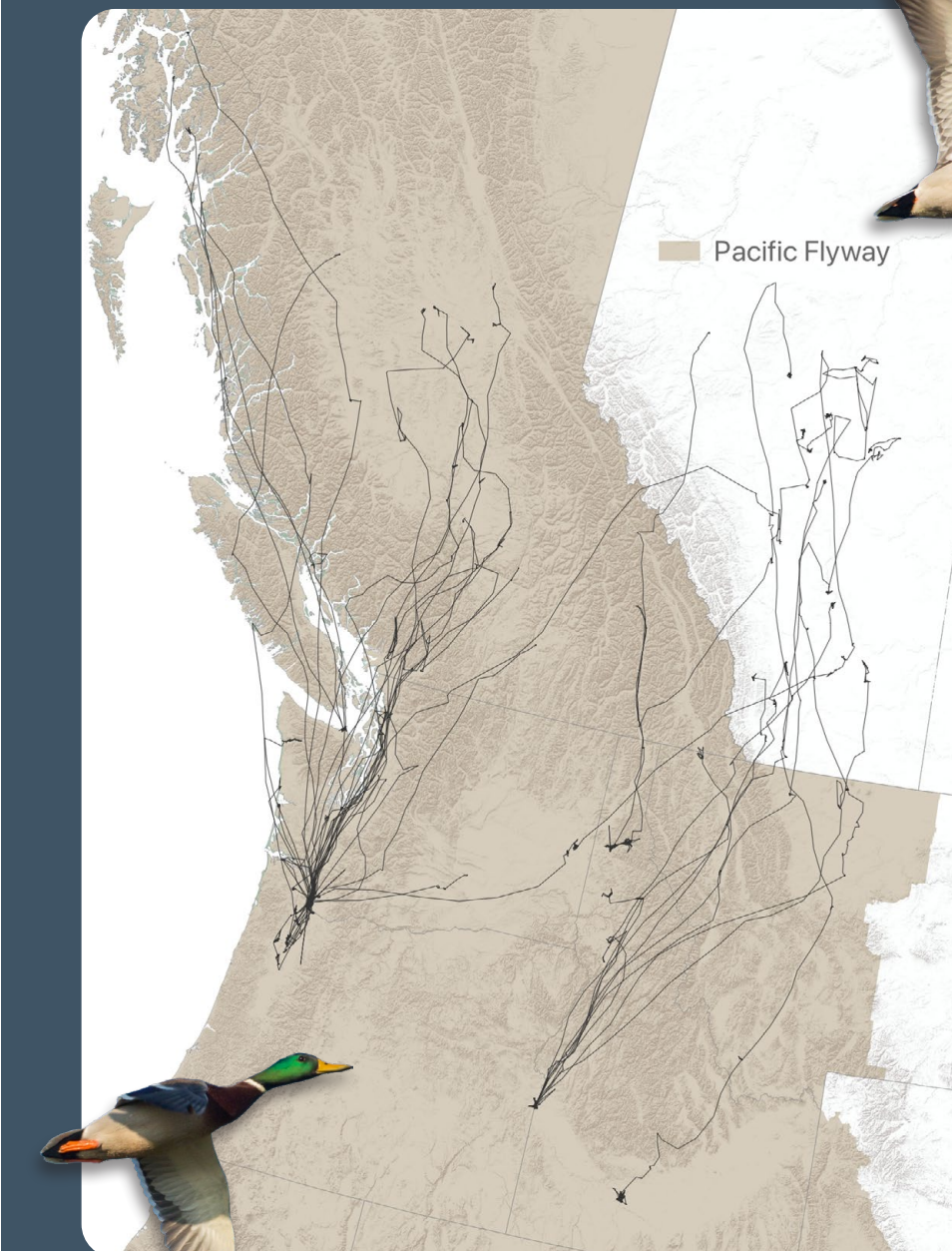
▶ **DR. PATRICK DONELLY (DU RESEARCH SCIENTIST) WORKING ALONGSIDE IDAHO FISH & GAME TO CAPTURE MALLARDS FOR MARKING.**

WESTERN MALLARD STUDY

In spring 2026, DU launched a major multi-year study with state and federal partners to better understand what drives mallard populations in the Pacific Flyway. During the study's first captures, DU and partners deployed over 60 drake mallards equipped with backpack transmitters throughout Washington, Oregon, and Idaho and are now tracking their movements into Alaska, British Columbia, and Alberta. By following mallards year-round, the study will identify how mallards use wetlands throughout their life cycle, helping guide more effective conservation and waterfowl management across the Flyway.



▶ **DR. PATRICK DONELLY SHOWING IDFG HOW TO OUTFIT MALLARDS WITH GPS UNITS**



2026 pilot study results showing real-time spring migrations (April-May) of over 60 mallards marked in Idaho, Oregon & Washington.

These movements demonstrate how GPS tracking tied to finescale habitat use can directly guide targeted conservation investments across the Pacific Flyway and beyond.

Over the next few years, researchers will continue capturing and fitting more than 800 drake mallards throughout seven western states with small GPS trackers to identify their migration, nesting, molting, and wintering patterns. DU scientists will also use satellite imagery to monitor wetland conditions across the Flyway and direct conservation efforts where they are needed most. In addition, DU is in the process of developing an interactive app which will allow DU members to view the movements of the transmitted mallards via handheld devices.



▶ **MALLARD WEARING GPS UNIT**



POLICY

▶ PHOTO PROVIDED BY KELLY WARREN (DU REGIONAL BIOLOGIST) TO SHARE WITH OREGON CONSTITUENTS & DU AUDIENCE

IN OREGON, DU helped halt IP28, an initiative that would have banned hunting and fishing in the state and made breeding practices for dogs and livestock illegal. In June, DU delivered 8 million educational ads to voters about IP28. In July, proponents failed to secure enough signatures for the ballot. DU is continuing the fight by working with legislators in both parties to consider a constitutional amendment protecting the rights to hunt, fish and farm. DU also worked to prevent the Legislature from passing Measure 114, the Reduction of Gun Violence Act. Implementation of the measure in its current form will be delayed by one year.

IN WASHINGTON, DU introduced House Bill 2625 to support nonprofit fundraising through raffles, bingo, and other games of chance. In 2026, DU partnered with the Nonprofit Association of Washington and built a coalition of more than 70 supporting organizations. DU also helped defeat HB5098, which would have prohibited firearms at DU fundraisers held on public property, including fairgrounds, recreation centers, and similar venues. While DU had planned to pursue an amendment exempting nonprofit fundraising events, a legal analysis prepared by DU outlining the bill's impacts on conservation and charitable fundraising helped stop the legislation in committee.

IN IDAHO, Members of Congress from across the region are supporting DU's federal legislation, S.1516, the Northwest Wetlands Voluntary Incentives Program (VIP) Act. If enacted, the bill could provide up to \$50 million for wetland restoration and water infrastructure projects that benefit waterfowl, salmon, and other wildlife. Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID) is the lead Republican sponsor in the Senate, and Representative Mike Simpson (R-ID) has expressed support in the House. Additional regional supporters include Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), Representative Ryan Zinke (R-MT), Representative Val Hoyle (D-OR), and Representative Kim Schrier (D-WA).

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

▶ **BILL AND TERESA FUCHS' GENEROSITY BRINGS INNOVATIVE WETLAND MANAGEMENT TOOLS TO HABITAT MANAGERS IN EASTERN OREGON**

Longtime DU supporters Bill and Teresa Fuchs of Chester, Idaho, were recently recognized at a donor dedication event at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area near La Grande, Oregon. The event celebrated their generous contribution of an Aquatic Vegetation Rake (AVR), a specialized excavator attachment that will help improve wetland management and conservation efforts across the marsh.

Provided to ODFW through DU, the AVR will be used to control invasive aquatic vegetation, including cattail and bulrush, and maintain waterways more efficiently than traditional methods such as dredging or herbicide application. The equipment offers a faster, more cost-effective, and less disruptive approach to wetland stewardship.

Designed by Bill Fuchs and his company, Maximized Water Management, LLC, the AVR provides habitat managers with an innovative tool for long-term water and wetland management.

The Fuchs family's commitment to conservation extends well beyond this donation. For many years, they have supported DU by donating hunts and hunting-fishing trips to fundraising events and serving as volunteer leaders with their local chapter. Their generosity and dedication to conservation will benefit wetlands, waterfowl, and other wildlife for years to come.

For more information about the Aquatic Vegetation Rake, visit: www.maximizedwatermanagement.com





THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Your commitment to the Wings and Wetlands Initiative goes beyond conservation. By volunteering your time, attending DU events, and staying engaged in our work, you help build the community and momentum needed to protect wetlands, strengthen wildlife habitat, and sustain waterfowl for generations to come. Every event attended, connection made, and hour volunteered helps move our mission forward.

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Thank you for making this work possible.





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