



★ CONVERTING BALLARD WMA TO DUCK HABITAT

The Big River Pump Station is at the heart of Ballard Wildlife Management Area’s (WMA) wetland renovation and strategic plan for managing water levels at the site. The massive pump will be at the upriver end of the Ohio River.

Ballard WMA is an 8,000-acre state-owned wetland on the banks of the Ohio River. Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) traditionally managed the WMA for wintering Canada geese. But by the end of the 1990s, the rise of no-till farming and decreased snow cover in states north of Kentucky resulted in fewer geese wintering at Ballard WMA. However, the mild falls brought more ducks to the area. KDFWR recognized the need to meet the evolving habitat demands of migrating and wintering ducks. They partnered with Ducks Unlimited (DU) to transition the WMA from centralized roost lakes for geese to dispersed flooded forage habitats for ducks.



KDFWR and DU engineers have been moving forward with plans for the pump station since Aug. 2021, investing nearly \$500,000 to complete the restoration design for the \$10.2 million construction project. The Big River pump station will be the primary water source for KDFWR to manage over 3,600 acres of floodplain at the WMA.

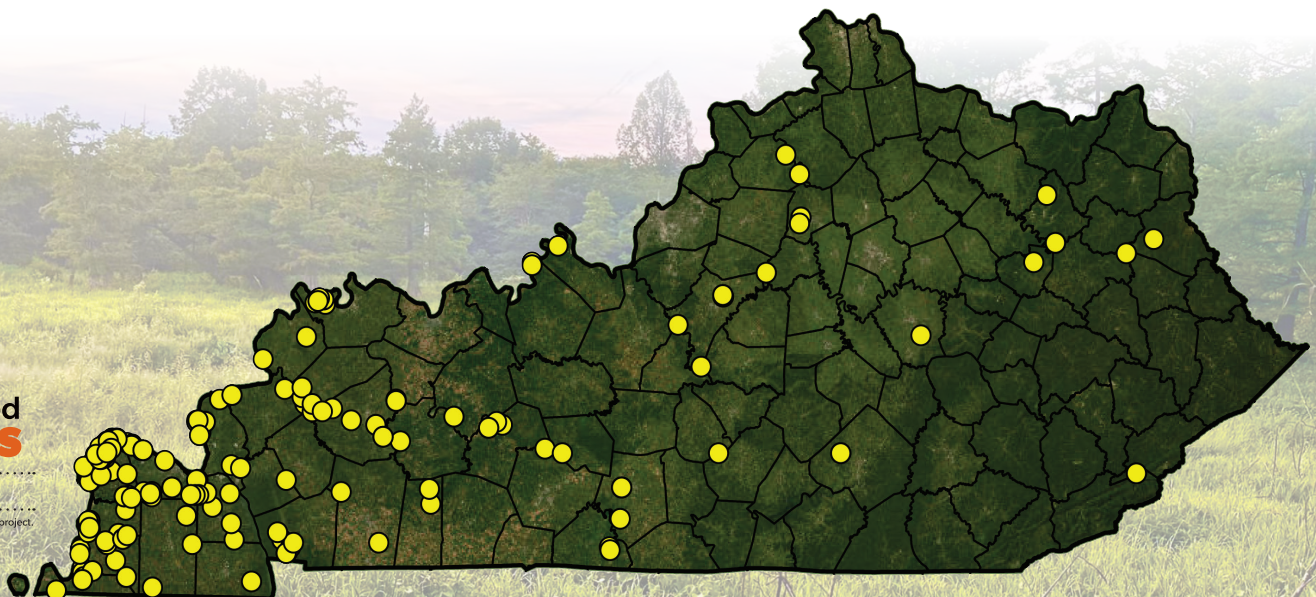
Due to the project’s overall size, construction will be completed in two phases. Phase I will include the installation of a pump intake extending from the pump basin into the Ohio River, the construction of the 31-foot-deep pump basin and distribution chamber, and a 21-foot tower that will house the electrical controls to keep them above floodwaters. The work will be funded by a \$3.375 million Pittman-Robertson grant to KDFWR leveraged by a \$1.125 million commitment from DU.

Phase II will focus on moving water into Shelby Lake and distributing it to other parts of the WMA and private lands. Implementing Phase II requires securing \$1.4 million to leverage an additional \$4.2 million in Pittman-Robertson funds available to complete the project. This includes burying nearly 3,000 feet of 48-inch force main pipe, installation of three 16,000 gpm pumps, and establishing over a mile of three-phase electric to power the massive pump system.

**Ducks Unlimited
PROJECTS**

● Completed Project(s)

Note: Project points may represent more than one project.





WATER STRUCTURES AT BALLARD PRECEDE PUMP STATION

Water structure updates continue at Shelby Lake, Turner–Butler Lake and Lake Slough at Ballard WMA. The infrastructure upgrades are needed before the Big River Pump Station can handle the increased water supply into the area. The structures will be even larger than those recently built to manage the Front Sloughs. They will be capable of dispersing massive amounts of Ohio River flood waters that have historically inundated the area, making wetland management difficult. The Shelby Lake structure at the top end of the slough system was completed in December 2023. That structure replaced a single 24-inch corrugated metal pipe with three 5-foot bays, providing substantially more water level control to meet the needs of public and adjoining private lands. The construction of new infrastructure to manage Turner-Butler Lake is also underway and expected to be completed before the 2024-25 waterfowl season starts. Lake Slough and other wetland units at Ballard WMA will see additional structure upgrades soon.



NRCS PROGRAM UNDERWAY IN KENTUCKY

In January of 2024, DU launched a new partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in Kentucky to support the delivery of Kentucky’s Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) program. As part of this project, DU has hired two wetland biologists to provide technical assistance for new and existing wetland easements. The biologists coordinate with NRCS staff for daily guidance and direction. Their primary responsibility is to support the delivery of the WRE program, which is focused on private and tribal lands.

WREs are a component of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program that provides habitat for migratory waterfowl and other wetland-dependent wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. Wetland restoration also improves water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reducing flooding, recharging groundwater, protecting biological diversity, providing resilience to climate change, and providing educational, scientific, and limited recreational opportunities.



DUCKS UNLIMITED conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America’s waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

KENTUCKY CONSERVATION STAFF

Dane Cramer Regional Biologist
dcramer@ducks.org • 734.646.7896

Ellie Moore Wetland Biologist
emoore@ducks.org • 270.610.1416

Jason Beirman Wetland Biologist
jbeirman@ducks.org • 270.625.9953

KENTUCKY NUMBERS

2023

- 92 acres conserved
- \$380,198.45 invested

HISTORICAL

- 15,217.68 acres conserved
- \$4,310,304.80 invested



GREAT LAKES / ATLANTIC REGION

7322 NEWMAN BOULEVARD
 BUILDING 2 SUITE 200
 DEXTER, MI 48130

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WWW.DUCKS.ORG/KENTUCKY