



GREAT LAKES / ATLANTIC REGION

Iowa

2024 STATE CONSERVATION REPORT



KEEPING IOWA'S WATER CLEAN

Since 2020, Ducks Unlimited (DU) and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) have worked to restore native wetlands and improve water quality in the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) to benefit wildlife and state residents. Iowa has undertaken an aggressive initiative to reduce 45% of the nitrogen that enters its

waterways through the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy. To accomplish this goal, the state hopes to construct thousands of wetlands that filter nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus.

Ten wetlands have already been restored, plus DU and IDALS agreed to a five-year \$7.1 million contract in 2023. The focus of this partnership will be on wetland habitat, in-field buffers, bioreactors (wood chip pits that filter water from tile runoff), multi-purpose oxbows and other soil health practices. In the next five years, DU's conservation specialists, Geographic Information Systems team, and engineers will identify 500 potential wetland locations, contact 400 prospective landowners, and assist in the installation of 60 new wetlands. DU will also help design 10 oxbows, 25 bioreactors, and several saturated buffers.

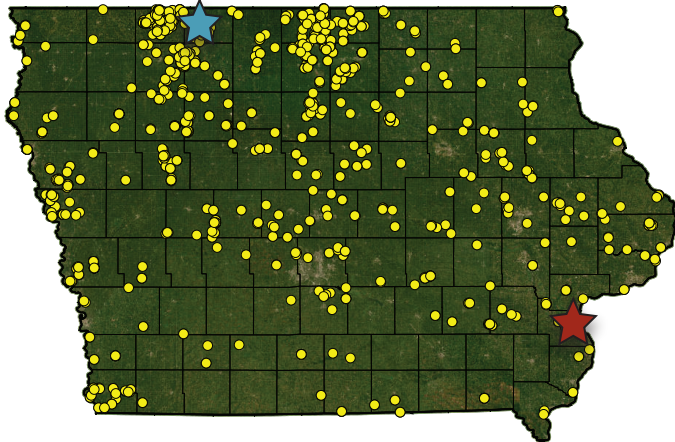
★ INFRASTRUCTURE ADDED AT WEST SWAN LAKE

The completion of a \$700,000 project at West Swan Lake will allow site managers to better control water levels and return the lake to its natural state. Funding for the new infrastructure was provided by a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant. DU and Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) also injected money into the restoration, which included site planning and a yellow perch and northern pike fish stocking program. Three separate water structures were added to West Swan. The main structure can draw down the lake so that vegetation, like cattails, coontail and sego pond weed grow. The two other structures keep invasive carp and bullhead out of West Swan. A fish barrier was also built near the outlet of Ingham Lake that will let water flow through but not invasive fish. A second structure allows IDNR to manipulate water levels in East Slough Marsh, between Ingham and West Swan to improve habitat conditions and water quality.



★ BRINGING THE DUCKS BACK TO ODESSA

Lake Odessa Waterfowl Management Area and Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge total more than 6,600 acres of emergent and forested wetlands adjacent to the Mississippi River. Both sites have historically drained through a single water control structure into the Mississippi. Prolonged flooding has resulted in high water being trapped within Lake Odessa as it cannot drain through the existing structure fast enough. Floods during the growing season have killed off extensive stands of native buckbrush and bottomland timber, prime waterfowl habitat. DU installed a new screw gate on the existing structure to increase the capacity of the outlet and help lower water levels in Lake Odessa to improve growing conditions and bottomland timber health. The project was completed last spring with funding from NAWCA.



Ducks Unlimited PROJECTS

● Completed Project(s)
Note: Project points may represent more than one project.



USDA FUNDS CLIMATE-SMART FARMING

In Nov. 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded DU an \$8 million grant to implement on-farm climate-smart practices in Northeast Iowa. The funding is part of four separate grants totaling nearly \$52 million, which will be also used for projects in Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The money was allocated to DU under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which incentivizes a voluntary, partnership-driven approach to conservation on working agricultural lands.

Through the Scott County Iowa Working Lands for Resilient Communities project, DU will work with farmers and landowners to install climate-smart conservation practices. This includes restoring in field and edge of field wetlands that improve water quality and quantity. The wetlands will also benefit soil health and wildlife habitat.

“Ducks Unlimited is excited to collaborate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative, Partners for Scott County, and others, to support the delivery of this project,” said Chris McLeland, DU’s director of agriculture programs. “DU recognizes the role voluntary conservation practices play in restoring and enhancing wetlands and associated habitats, while also providing critical ecosystems services.”

IDALS has been working with soil and water conservation districts to address local water quality protection needs as part of the state’s Nutrient Reduction Strategy, established in 2013. The goal is to protect water quality in Iowa by targeting and preventing off-site sediment, nutrient loads and livestock waste pollution. The USDA funding for Scott County is another essential component to the future of soil health and clean water in Iowa.

“Iowa has invested heavily in water quality over the last decade,” said DU Regional Biologist Mike Shannon. “This effort in Scott County is also going to help with flood mitigation near the Mississippi River and water retention in times of drought.”



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

IOWA CONSERVATION STAFF

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IOWA NUMBERS

2023

- 1,469 acres conserved
- \$2,193,693 invested

HISTORICAL

- 85,330 acres conserved
- \$18,314,950 invested



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