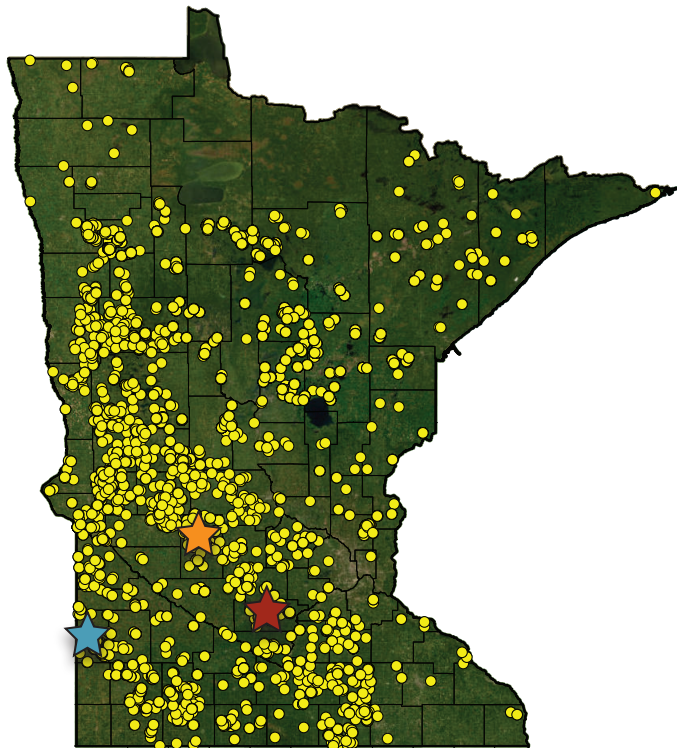




LIVING LAKES INITIATIVE UPDATE

During 2023, Ducks Unlimited (DU) completed 60 projects in Minnesota, impacting 28,707 acres. In central and southern Minnesota, 3,849 acres of prairie grasslands and wetlands were conserved, and another 24,858 acres were enhanced in 89 wild rice lakes in northern Minnesota. The key to our success in 2023 were strong partnerships and robust state grants from the Outdoor Heritage Fund and federal dollars from the North America Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Our continued relationships with philanthropic foundations, corporate partners and DU major donors are critical to the success of the Living Lakes Initiative, which safeguards Minnesota’s shallow lakes and wetlands.



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

★ \$1 MILLION PROJECT FINALIZED AT CHEN BAY

DU recently partnered with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) on a \$1 million, 157-acre project at Chen Bay Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Lake Benton, restoring cropland to native wetlands and prairie. This conservation work provides nesting cover for waterfowl and creates a buffer to Pickerel Lake, which

DU and MNDNR enhanced in 2015. Due to the conservation work undertaken by DU and MNDNR, Pickerel Lake has been transformed from a cattail-choked wetland full of invasive common carp to pristine waterfowl habitat. Many different species of puddle ducks nest at Pickerel Lake in the spring. Their broods feast on aquatic invertebrates which are in high abundance since the enhancement.



★ INDIAN LAKE WATER MANAGEMENT UPGRADES

Indian Lake (432 acres), located in Sibley County, provides abundant aquatic foods and habitat for breeding and migrating waterfowl. It is also open to public hunting. But invasive fish and stabilized high water levels—due to rain and landscape drainage—had degraded the lake and waterfowl use. In 2023, DU installed a variable-crest outlet water control structure and outlet pipeline at Indian Lake, which allowed MNDNR to conduct temporary drawdowns that enhance

the lake. Five land tracts totaling 396 acres were also purchased to expand Indian Lake WMA. Work on Indian Lake and the WMA was funded through state Outdoor Heritage Fund appropriations, a North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant, and DU Living Lakes Initiative Major Sponsors.



WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA PARTNERSHIP

Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) are protected properties in the Prairie Pothole Region purchased with federal duck stamp dollars. They provide much-needed breeding habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Last year, DU restored or enhanced 337 wetlands totaling 366 acres on WPAs in Minnesota. Now, with state Outdoor Heritage Fund appropriations and a better understanding of prairie wetland ecology and restoration techniques, DU and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are making WPAs as productive as possible for waterfowl and other wildlife. DU has partnered with USFWS to employ six field biologists supported by three regional biologists working across four Wetland Management District Offices supported by a team of seven DU engineering staff focused on restoring high priority WPAs for breeding ducks in western Minnesota.

★ WHITEFIELD WMA BECOMES WATERFOWL HAVEN

Since 2019, DU has purchased and restored three properties from private sellers totaling 324 acres, to expand Whitefield WMA, where 30 wetlands and 204 acres of native grasses have also been conserved at the public site. The conservation work has provided a high quality of habitat that will benefit wildlife. With funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, NAWCA grants, and Living Lakes Major Sponsors, Whitefield, which once consisted of a few cattail-choked wetlands, is now a diverse mix of habitat that supports waterfowl, deer, pheasants, and pollinators.



WORKING LANDS TEAM ADDS BIOLOGISTS

The Working Lands team hired Sabrina Claeys, a Grazing Biologist in Thief River Falls, and Liam Bonk, a Winona-based Private Lands Biologist. Claeys is administering a grazing program in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). She delivers technical assistance to livestock producers, helping improve their operations through rotational grazing, water distribution, pasture reconstructions and the integration of livestock in cover crop systems. Bonk is delivering a U.S. Pork Sustainability grant, a program that falls under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities. The program provides technical assistance and financial incentives to livestock and commodity crop producers for regenerative agriculture practices such as cover crops, no-till planting, field buffers and livestock integration.



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

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MINNESOTA NUMBERS

2023

- 1,539 acres conserved
- \$15,783,960 invested

HISTORICAL

- 241,332 acres conserved
- \$141,892,960 invested



GREAT LAKES / ATLANTIC REGION

7322 NEWMAN BOULEVARD
BUILDING 2 SUITE 200
DEXTER, MI 48130

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
WWW.DUCKS.ORG/MINNESOTA