

Key Habitat Conservation Priority

Parkland Ecoregion

\$87.5 million

THE PARKLAND ECOREGION FEATURES SEMI-PERMANENT WETLANDS AND LUSH VEGETATION ATTRACTIVE TO BREEDING WATERFOWL. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS LANDSCAPE'S ABILITY TO SUPPORT WATERFOWL HAS DECLINED DRAMATICALLY OVER THE LAST CENTURY. DUC IS STRIVING TO CONSERVE EXISTING WETLANDS AND ASSOCIATED GRASSLAND HABITATS, AND TO RESTORE THOSE DEGRADED HABITATS THAT NO LONGER FUNCTION FOR WATERFOWL.



LOCATED BETWEEN THE BOREAL Forest to the north and the Prairies to the south, the Parkland ecoregion covers nearly 55 million acres. Millions of depressions (pot-holes) left by retreating glaciers some 10-15,000 years ago provide relatively stable habitat for breeding waterfowl due to abundant precipitation. With more breeding ducks on average than the Prairies, the Parkland ecoregion is a high conservation priority for DUC.

Nearly 25 per cent of North America's ducks depend on the Parkland. The abundance of semi-permanent wetlands and lush vegetation makes this area of critical importance to waterfowl, especially diving ducks, with approximately 45 per cent of the continent's redheads and canvasbacks breeding here. High numbers of small wetlands also make the Parkland attractive to mallards, with roughly 31 per cent of surveyed mallards found here.

In the last 125 years the Parklands have changed dramatically and their ability to support breeding waterfowl has declined. In some areas, between 50 – 90 per cent of these critical wetlands have been drained or filled, meaning less area for healthy watersheds and far fewer homes for waterfowl and other wetland dependent wildlife.

DUC is striving to both conserve existing wetland and associated grassland

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habitats and restore those degraded habitats that no longer function for waterfowl. Restoration of uplands primarily focuses on the conversion of cropland to grassland (breeding habitat). This is accomplished through partnership with landowners, conservation forage programs, and through the promotion of additional tame pasture within grazing associations. Occasionally, marginal cultivated land is purchased by DUC and seeded to perennial cover.

Improving the function of annual cropland for waterfowl and other wildlife also occurs through the promotion of winter wheat programs. Our strategy includes funding winter wheat breeders to improve the success of winter wheat varieties, and educating producers on the benefits of winter wheat and the best practices for growing it.

Wetland restoration is targeted to areas where wetlands have been drained but suitable upland nesting cover remains. Given the importance of small wetlands to breeding waterfowl and other wildlife, and the tendency for these to be the ones most often drained, our programs focus on restoring hydrology to these vital

wetlands through the establishment of ditch plugs.

Conservation of intact wetlands and associated grasslands is essential to our efforts. DUC focuses on high priority wetland and waterfowl areas most at risk of cultivation or drainage. Through direct purchase, purchased or donated conservation easements, or through grazing programs aimed at improving grassland sustainability, we are able to secure these essential areas.

Policy programs are also critically important if we are to achieve widespread protection and restoration of our critical waterfowl habitats. Initiatives here include working with federal and provincial governments on agricultural policies, involvement in integrated watershed management efforts, and conducting research in support of efforts related to ecological goods and services.

Through our conservation efforts, our goal is to conserve 240,000 acres of existing upland and wetland habitats and restore an additional 170,000 acres.

