

NEWS

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GLACIAL RIDGE SETS THE SCENE FOR EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

MENTOR, MN, April 21, 2006 – More than 130 6th grade students, natural resources experts and government officials celebrated Earth Day yesterday at Glacial Ridge, the largest northern tall grass prairie/wetland restoration in North America.

Students from Red Lake Falls and Crookston learned about wetlands, water quality, how to identify waterfowl, and other natural resources topics important to Minnesota. These environmental learning stations were made possible by contributions of the local conservation partnership.

Dana York, Associate Chief for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Washington, D.C., told the crowd, "Cooperative conservation is what NRCS is all about-working with landowners and partners-helping people help the land. It involves joining together in a voluntary effort at the local level to conserve natural resources. It focuses on the bottom-up solutions rather than top-down mandates."

William Hunt, State Conservationist for NRCS in Minnesota said "Glacial Ridge Project was one of 10 projects in the country recognized at the White House Cooperative Conservation Conference in August, 2005. Here in Minnesota, more than 30 partners have played an active role in returning the land to its pre-settlement wetlands condition. When fully restored, the project lands will provide tremendous habitat for waterfowl, prairie chickens and other upland birds, and a host of other plant and animal prairie species."

The Glacial Ridge Project is part of a 28,000-acre wetland restoration site that is home to moose, dozens of waterfowl species, as well as upland birds including the Sand Hill Crane and the Greater Prairie Chicken. Less than one percent of the tallgrass prairie that covered most of the western and southern parts of Minnesota before European settlement remains today. In the late 1970's into the early 1980's 15,000 acres of tall grass prairie and 1,700 acres of wetlands on Glacial Ridge were converted to row crop agriculture.

Glacial Ridge includes 3,500 acres enrolled in NRCS' Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Approximately 13,000 acres are managed by The Nature Conservancy.

For information about the Glacial Ridge Project, please visit www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/news/glacial_ridge.html. For information about NRCS conservation projects and programs in Minnesota, please visit www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov.

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