



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service
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MINNESOTA ENROLLS NEARLY 10,000 ACRES IN WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM BOOSTING U.S. TOTAL TO MORE THAN TWO MILLION ACRES

ST PAUL, MINNESOTA Oct. 29, 2008—Minnesota has enrolled 9,776 new acres in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) since August 1, 2008 helping exceed the Federal government’s 3-year goal of increasing the number and size of America’s wetlands. Nationwide more than two million acres have now been enrolled in WRP.

“Thanks to the stewardship ethic of our farmers and ranchers, people here in Minnesota and across the nation enjoy the benefits of more and better wetlands,” said Arlen Lancaster, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service. “I am really honored to mark this historic conservation achievement and to recognize the committed stewardship of WRP participants here in Minnesota and across the country, who have voluntarily restored and protected the wetlands on their farms.”

More than 600 Minnesota landowners have enrolled over 75,000 acres in WRP since the program was introduced in 1990.

William Hunt, State Conservationist said. “I personally want to thank everyone here in Minnesota who worked so hard and committed so much of their resources to achieve this incredible conservation milestone.”

Many individuals and groups can claim credit for this achievement and we should all be proud of what has been accomplished. A key partner in this effort—the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, BWSR for short. By using BWSR’s Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve Program, in combination with WRP and the assistance of local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, this partnership has been able to leverage a much bigger bang for the conservation buck; by some estimates, twice as much as we would have been able to do working alone.

Another primary reason for Minnesota’s success has been the Habitat Conservation Partnership which is an effort combining the resources of the State of Minnesota, agencies and non-profit groups to focus on habitat restoration throughout the state. Primary funding for this effort comes from the Minnesota Legislature as recommended by The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, LCCMR for short. Over \$1.782 million has been allocated from the Legislature over the past 7 years to

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Ducks Unlimited through this project to hire contract technicians to provide direct technical assistance to landowners who enroll in WRP.

Wetlands support diverse populations of wildlife, plants and fish, and supply habitat for hundreds of species, including many listed as endangered or threatened. Often called “nature’s sponges,” wetlands help protect water quality by filtering out pollutants and protect towns and cities against floods and storm surges. Wetlands also buffer coastal areas from erosion. They offer aesthetic and recreational opportunities, as well.

Administered by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, the WRP provides eligible landowners the technical and financial assistance they need to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water and related natural resource concerns on private agricultural land.

For additional information on WRP and other conservation programs available in Minnesota visit: www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/

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