



NEWS RELEASE

GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL OFFICE

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CURTIS LAKE ENHANCEMENT BEGINS **Another project made possible by the Outdoor Heritage Fund**

MARSHALL, Minn., March 31, 2010 – Ducks Unlimited began enhancement of another shallow lake project funded in part by the Outdoor Heritage Fund as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. The early warm weather melted snow and allowed crews get started on the Curtis Lake project near Marshall.

“To complete construction of this shallow lake project by summer, our contractor needed to mobilize the required heavy equipment, steel structure materials and rock riprap before the spring roadway load restrictions were posted,” said Brad Karel, DU construction manager.

Karel and contractor Chad Monson Excavating of Willmar began working in early March on Curtis Lake to install a sheet pile water control structure designed by DU. “After a brief shutdown for the spring runoff, we will be able to resume work as soon as site conditions dry and improve,” Karel said.

Another large water control structure and a fish barrier will go in when construction resumes. This and other large and complex DU shallow lake enhancement projects create and sustain Minnesota jobs that benefit local economies.

The new water control structures will allow the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources field staff to actively manage water levels in Curtis Lake. Temporary water level draw downs simulate natural periodic drought conditions that will rejuvenate the basin’s aquatic ecology and optimize wildlife habitat in the lake, as well as improve hunting opportunities. Once the lake is enhanced, it will be especially important for migrating and brood-rearing waterfowl.

Curtis Lake is a 440-acre shallow lake with an average depth of four and a half feet. During their assessment in 2006, the DNR found that aquatic plants only occurred in 10 percent of the basin. This condition was due to stagnant high water levels, poor water quality and turbid conditions. Typically, a healthy shallow lake at four feet deep would have aquatic plants occurring in 100 percent of the basin because the water is clear and sunlight can reach the lake floor. The DNR legally designated Curtis Lake for wildlife management purposes in 2006. More recently the DNR was able to finalize easements with landowners around the outlet of Curtis Lake that enabled enhancement activities to move forward and will ensure management activities persist into the future.

“This project was made possible with assistance from local landowners such as the Busack and Bode families, public support for Lake Designation and financial support from the Cottonwood Sportsmen’s Club,” said Bill Schuna, DNR’s assistant area wildlife manager in Marshall.

Schuna acknowledges the strong partnership with DU and the support of private landowners, the public and local conservation organizations. “DU played a vital role in this project by providing wetland engineering

design expertise that will give us the ability to temporarily drawdown Curtis Lake. A drawdown and fish barrier will improve critical habitat for waterfowl and prevent invasive fish such as carp from re-entering the lake. These efforts will ultimately improve water quality and clarity,” Schuna said.

Primary funding for this project was provided by Outdoor Heritage Funds and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. The Cottonwood Sportsmen’s Club also provided local cost-share to the DNR for this project.

DU and the DNR’s Section of Wildlife work together to enhance shallow lake habitats throughout Minnesota. This partnership will help fulfill the shallow lake goals of both the DNR’s *Duck Recovery Plan* and DU’s *Living Lakes Initiative*, and will address the wetland habitat objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

DU has five other shallow lake enhancement projects under contract that are funded by a 2009 Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, including Jennie Lake in Douglas County, Ash Lake in Grant County, Cory Lake in Lac qui Parle County, Round Lake in Murray County and Rice Lake in Faribault County. Construction plans for Smith Lake in Wright County and Lake Christina in Douglas County will go out for bid later this year. Each project has been developed in partnership with the DNR’s Section of Wildlife.

Ducks Unlimited is the world’s largest non-profit organization dedicated to conserving North America’s continually disappearing waterfowl habitats. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 12 million acres thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent. Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.

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Photo Caption: Driving steel sheet-pile for a water control structure on Curtis Lake. Photo courtesy of Brad Karel, DU construction manager.