



NEWS RELEASE

GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL OFFICE

2525 River Road, Bismarck, ND 58503
701.355.3500 • www.ducks.org

DU VOLUNTEERS TOUR SMITH LAKE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT AND LEARN ABOUT BENEFITS

HOWARD LAKE, MINN., Aug. 31, 2010 – Volunteers with the Heart of the Lakes Ducks Unlimited (DU) chapter from Annandale/Maple Lake recently toured a new wetland enhancement project at Smith Lake and were excited to learn that the poor wetland conditions in the lake will soon change.

“I can’t wait to come back to see the re-growth of the bulrush and submerged aquatic plants that will make this a better wetland for the ducks,” Ben Wandmacher, area DU chairman, said.

Smith Lake is a 330-acre lake in Wright County located north of Highway 12 and west of Howard Lake, Minn. With an average depth of four feet and a maximum depth of only six feet, the lake is considered a shallow lake, not capable of supporting a quality fishery. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has labeled Smith Lake a “designated wildlife lake,” one of only 44 such lakes in the state, which allows them to actively manage its water levels to improve habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

In recent years, carp and other undesirable fish have degraded Smith Lake creating the need for an enhancement project.

The enhancement project will begin in October and construction crews will install more than 1,000 feet of 24-inch pipe and a variable crest water control structure on the outlet of the lake. These structures will allow Minnesota DNR wildlife managers to temporarily lower lake water levels to winterkill undesirable fish, such as carp. This process will consolidate bottom sediments and restore aquatic vegetation in the lake’s basin. This temporary drawdown condition may last two years in order to rejuvenate the lake.

This is a partnership project with wetland engineering assistance provided by DU, state funding recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and management of the lake conducted by the DNR.

Temporarily lowering water levels in Smith Lake will not only help clear the wetland of undesirable fish through natural winterkill, but it will also promote the germination and growth of the aquatic plants and invertebrates favored by ducks and other wildlife. The removal of fish and return of aquatic plants and invertebrates to the basin will improve water quality as well, which will benefit downstream water resources.

“Just as fire naturally rejuvenates prairie habitat for upland wildlife, so do temporary draw-downs in shallow lakes for wetland wildlife,” said Josh Kavanagh, DU biologist for central Minnesota. “Draw-downs simulate natural droughts, which provide critical variation in water levels that drive productivity in wetlands. Without periodic droughts, wetlands are simply not as productive for wildlife.”

The project is part of DU’s *Living Lakes* conservation initiative and the Minnesota DNR’s *Duck Recovery Plan*. These cooperative efforts call for the enhancement, restoration and protection of shallow lakes and large marshes for both waterfowl migration and brood-rearing habitat.

The Heart of The Lakes DU chapter will have its next conservation fundraising event on Tuesday, September 21, 2010, at the American Legion in Maple Lake, Minn. For tickets contact Devin Davidson, 320-274-5614 or via email at Davidsondu1987@hotmail.com.

Ducks Unlimited is the world’s largest nonprofit 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.

-30-

Jennifer Kross
Becky Jones Mahlum

701-202-8896
701-355-3507

jkross@ducks.org
bjonesmahlum@ducks.org