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**Ducks Unlimited enhances Shaokatan State Wildlife Management Area**

Legacy Amendment funds acquisition and water structure to improve shallow lake

IVANHOE, Minn. – April 18, 2013 – Just in time for spring migrating birds, Ducks Unlimited has completed the enhancement of 121-acre Biggs Lake on Lincoln County’s Shaokatan State Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The project featured the acquisition of 40 acres to buffer the lake and the installation of a new water control structure to give the DNR water-level-management capability. The acquired land was transferred to the DNR, will be seeded to native prairie upland grasses later this year and will provide the DNR with full riparian ownership around Biggs Lake. The new variable-crest water control structure will allow DNR wildlife managers to conduct temporary water-level draw-downs to enhance the aquatic ecology of Biggs Lake for wetland wildlife. The DNR is beginning a temporary draw-down of the basin this year.

Biggs Lake is a shallow lake that was drained in the early 1900s and restored in the early 1990s through the cooperative efforts of the DNR, DU and local conservation partners, led by DNR Marshall Area Wildlife Manager Bob Meyer, who retired last fall after more than 40 years of public service. Unfortunately, when the shallow-lake basin was originally restored, not all the land bordering it was for sale, so the DNR was unable to acquire all the riparian water rights at the time. Thus, a fixed-crest dam – not easily accessible by the DNR – was installed to restore hydrology to the basin.

However, after passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment by Minnesota voters in November 2008, new state funding became available shortly before a cooperative landowner agreed to sell the last piece of private land on Biggs Lake. DU acquired 40 acres on the outlet of Biggs Lake through a 2009 appropriation from Minnesota’s Outdoor Heritage Fund as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. DU then engineered and installed the new water control structure through subsequent 2010 and 2012 appropriations from the Fund. Private and state funding for the new structure also helped leverage a federal grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) to complete the work.

“Enhancement of Biggs Lake was made possible through a cooperative partnership featuring a private landowner, the Minnesota DNR, dedicated state conservation funding from the Legacy Amendment and a federal NAWCA grant,” said Jon Schneider, DU manager of conservation in Minnesota. “This project is an excellent example of conservation partnerships envisioned through our Living Lakes conservation initiative and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan to benefit wildlife and the public alike, and we are very appreciative of all partners involved.”

[DU's Living Lakes Initiative](#) strives to help state and federal conservation agencies improve shallow lakes and large wetlands throughout Minnesota and Iowa for ducks and other wetland wildlife. The cooperative work among DU, the DNR and other partners will help fulfill the shallow-lake goals in Minnesota's "Duck Recovery Plan" and wetland habitat objectives in the [North American Waterfowl Management Plan](#).

Ducks Unlimited Inc. 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 13 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. For more information on our work, visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org). Connect with us on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/DucksUnlimited](https://facebook.com/DucksUnlimited), follow our tweets at [twitter.com/DucksUnlimited](https://twitter.com/DucksUnlimited) and watch DU videos at [youtube.com/DucksUnlimitedInc](https://youtube.com/DucksUnlimitedInc).

