

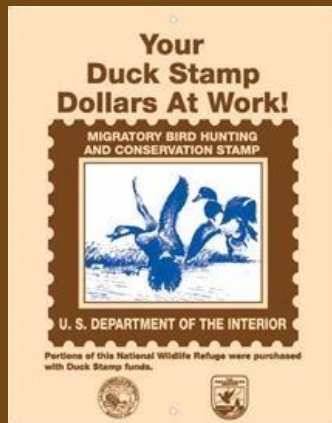
April 28, 2017



# WINGTIPS

Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

## MBCC Approves Acquisitions



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## Migratory Bird Conservation Commission Putting Stamp Dollars to Work

On the morning of April 26, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission met at the main Interior Department Building in Washington DC and put Duck Stamp dollars to work. Using dollars that went into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund last year - mostly from the Stamp, but also from import duties from arms and ammunition - the Commission invested in the growth of National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs). Up to 70 percent of the funds go to National Wildlife Refuge System wetlands and grasslands (fee-title and easements) in the Prairie Pothole Region. The rest, almost \$7.9 million, at this meeting went to four National Wildlife Refuges. The approvals for those four NWRs made by the Commission were as follows:

- 1 Blackwater NWR (MD) - for fee title of 126 acres of forested wetlands in the Kentuck Stamp to adjoin existing refuge wetlands. This is intended to benefit waterfowl (e.g., Mallard, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, and American Black Duck), Virginia Rails, and forest interior-dwelling songbirds. The price was \$415,900.
- 2 Upper Klamath NWR (OR) - for permanent easements of 2,412 acres on two adjacent ranches that would allow the crucial flooding of parts of these properties. A breach in existing levees would then restore the historic marshes and shallow wetlands for about 14,000 acres. (The

easements would be compatible with working ranch operations.) This would benefit waterfowl and a number of other wetland-associated birds. The price was \$7,144,000.

3 Dale Bumpers White River NWR (AR) - for 53 fee-title acres of bottomland hardwood forest, excellent for waterfowl (e.g., Mallard, Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Ring-necked Duck, Gadwall, and Green-winged Teal) and for Neotropical migrants. The price was \$186,000.

4 Felsenthal NWR (AR) - for 39 fee-title acres to protect and restore bottomland hardwood forest habitat for waterfowl (e.g., Mallard, Northern Pintail, and Wood Duck), wading birds, and Neotropical migrants. This is an isolated inholding at a bend in the Saline river whose acquisition would help consolidate management. The price was \$101,000.

If you bought a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (aka, Duck Stamp) last year, you helped pay for these four acquisitions. You may now pat yourself on the back.

The next MBCC meeting will take place in September, when more of last year's MBCF dollars will be spent to secure valuable wetland and grassland habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

If you want to know how the MBCC actually functions, see the article below by Alan Wentz, who will fill you in on one of the best efforts in U.S. conservation today.

## HOW THE MBCC WORKS - SECURING BIRD HABITAT

By Alan Wentz

So, if someone were to tell you there is a group in Washington, DC, working for conservation with special focus on birds and federal lands and it has final approval over tens of millions of dollars (annually), approves buying and leasing all sorts of federal interests in land, mostly wetlands and grasslands, and is completely bipartisan in every way with rarely any dissension within its own ranks, or from Congress, or from the public, you'd think "alternative facts" - right?

Oh, and it has been quietly doing this since 1929 and has spent 100s of millions of dollars in the process and intends to continue doing the same thing forever, then what would you say?

How about if I say the group includes members of Congress and the heads of federal agencies along with a rotating cast of state wildlife agencies and non-profit groups?

As avid readers of *Wingtips* and buyers of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps (commonly known as Duck Stamps), most of you know that the mystery group is the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. But I suspect you could ask the questions above of hundreds of people on the street or even from conservation agencies and organizations, including most Duck Stamp buyers, and only a minuscule percentage of those people would have any idea what you were talking about.

Maybe that's a good thing; flying below the radar is sometimes smart. On the other hand, knowledge is powerful, so let's take a quick look at the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

Passage of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act in February 1929 created the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The Act allows the federal government to acquire and protect habitat for migratory birds. But it was the passage of the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act in March 1934 that gave the Commission real clout and real purchasing power through stamp dollars. The

Commission approves purchases of interests in land and water by the Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition to approving purchase and rental prices, it considers establishment of new National Wildlife Refuges and gives final approval to grants under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

Funds under the purview of the MBCC for acquisition of National Wildlife Refuges generally come from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. Sources of revenue for the Fund include Federal migratory bird hunting and conservation stamp sales (Federal Duck Stamps), appropriations from the Wetlands Loan Act, disposals of land, proceeds from right-of-way sales across refuges, refuge entrance fees, import duties on arms and ammunition, reverted Federal Aid funds, and sale of products. In practice, however, most of the funds today come through the Duck Stamp and import duties. In fiscal year 2016, collections amounted to more than \$85 million. Over \$76 million were obligated for expenditure and carry-over funds will be available for fiscal year 2017.

So, who makes all these important conservation decisions? The original statute defined the membership of the MBCC, and it still does with a few modifications since the act passed. Members include the Secretary of the Interior serving as the Chair, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, two U.S. Senators appointed by the President of the Senate, and two members of the U.S. House of Representatives selected by the Speaker of the House - traditionally the members of Congress are selected from the two dominant political parties to maintain a bipartisan membership. The head of the USFWS Division of Realty serves as Commission Secretary. In addition, ex-officio members from any states where land interests are to be acquired are invited to participate in the discussion and to vote on acquisitions in their state. After the MBCC was given the authority to approve project funding under NAWCA in 1989, the law requires that two members of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council also serve as ex-officio members to consider and vote on any projects submitted for MBCC approval.



Cong. Dingell at his last MBCC meeting in 2014  
Photo: Desiree Sorenson-Groves

It's interesting to note that members of Congress who are appointed to the MBCC often are long-tenured. For instance, Congressman Silvio O. Conte (R-Massachusetts) served with enthusiasm for 25 years. But Congressman John Dingell (D-Michigan) served on the Commission for 45 years until his retirement from Congress - longer than any other appointee!

The Commission has regularly met three times a year in Washington DC for review and approval of fee-title and easement acquisitions, but the meetings are now usually held twice a year.

Overall, the MBCC, through the Fund, has helped to grow 253 refuges, accounting for over 2,406,000 purchased acres and 136,000 leased acres. If you add to that those WPAs in the refuge system - the "mini-refuge" Waterfowl Production Areas mostly found in the Prairie Pothole Region - the numbers of acres are increased by more than 3.2 million acres, about two-thirds of which are grassland or wetland perpetual easements or leases.

The business of the MBCC is regularly published and a press release issued after each meeting. More details can be found on the amazing work of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in

its annual reports on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [website under the Realty Archives](#). MBCC Reports for 2004 - 2016 report on each year's activities in great detail.

## JR. DUCK STAMP CONTEST WINNER CHOSEN

The 2017 Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest was held on Friday, April 21 at the [Charleston Music Hall](#) in Charleston, South Carolina. There, a panel of five judges chose the winner from among best-of-show entries from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

A talented 12-year-old artist from Duffield, Virginia, took top honors. Isaac Schreiber's lovely pair of flying Trumpeter Swans - shown on the right - will grace the 2017-2018 Junior Duck Stamp. The Junior Duck Stamp program began in 1989 as an extension of the Migratory Bird Conservation and Hunting Stamp, commonly known as the Federal Duck Stamp, and officially launched as the national Junior Duck Stamp art contest in 1993. It encourages students to explore their natural world, participate in outdoor recreation activities, and learn wildlife management principles. Some 3,000 Junior Duck Stamps are sold annually for \$5 each.



"Our nation's young people are our future conservation stewards, hunters and wildlife managers," said Acting USFWS Director Jim Kurth. "Efforts such as the Junior Duck Stamp Program that connect youth with their natural world and outdoor recreation help ensure that our natural resources and our sporting traditions will continue."

Daniel Billings, 16, of Gallatin, Missouri, took second place with his oil painting depicting a [Wood Duck](#). And third place went to Rene Christensen, 17, of Nekoosa, Wisconsin, for her graphite rendition of a pair of [Canada Geese](#).

The Junior Duck Stamp Contest winner receives \$1,000. The second place winner receives \$500, the third-place winner receives \$200, and a "Conservation Message" winner receives \$200.

You can buy Junior Duck Stamps online through the U.S. Postal Service and Amplex, and at some national wildlife refuges. Proceeds from the sale of Junior Duck Stamps are used for awards and scholarships to individuals who submit winning designs in state or national competitions and for awards to schools and other participants to further education activities related to the conservation education goals of the program.

The First Day of Sale ceremony for the 2017-2018 Federal and Junior Duck Stamps will be held on June 23 at Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World, Little Rock, Arkansas.

## Support the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

The Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to two fundamental goals:

1. To increase promotional and educational efforts among various target audiences concerning the stamp and the National Wildlife Refuge system.
2. To increase the regular, voluntary purchase of the stamp among hunters and non-hunters alike.



Our membership is annual, corresponding to the year of validity for the Federal Duck Stamp, namely from the beginning of July to the end of the following June. Our "Regular Friend" fee is modest, only \$15, but all Friends are also asked to *pledge to buy TWO stamps per year*, joining with other organizations across the country in that effort.

You can access a secure online form to join the Friends - or to make a contribution - [via Razoo](#). Or you can access our simple mail-in [membership form](#).

We encourage you to commit yourself to the promotion of the Stamp program, the Friends, and smart conservation through the sales and promotion of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp.

And don't forget support for the Jr. Duck Stamp Program which reaches tens of thousands of youngsters. One way to help is described here, on the right, through AmazonSmile.

### Shop at AmazonSmile

and Amazon will make a donation to:

The Junior Duck Stamp Program  
through our Friends

Get started

amazon smile

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