

July 27, 2017



# WINGTIPS

Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

## SANTA ANA NWR IN JEOPARDY



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## "The Wall" and ongoing developments in the Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley

The Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) of Texas is under assault. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its contractors have been taking soil samples, surveying portions of the refuge, and making other preparations in and around the refuge to build a huge and intrusive border wall. Apparently, work has been ongoing on the refuge for several months, but nothing was said to the public, until information leaked earlier this month.

We are taking action on this issue, as are many [other groups](#). We ask that you [help](#) (see the end of this article).

Santa Ana NWR protects 2,088 acres of unique habitat along the banks of the Rio Grande. The refuge was originally created in 1943 to protect migratory birds, and fully 94.9% of its property has been acquired through Stamp/MBCF dollars. The refuge rests on vital land, and it is estimated only 5% of the native landscape still exists in the LRGV.



Photo: USFWS

The refuge is home or a crucial stopover site for some 400 bird species that have been seen there, including migratory waterfowl, raptors, warblers, and a suite of "South Texas specialties" that are Mexican in character and barely range into Texas. Other wildlife species - from rare mammals to herps and butterflies - call the area home. Moreover, Santa Ana NWR is central to a complex of natural hotspots in The Valley that draws county-level economic income of over \$465 million per year and accounts for 7,000 jobs from eco-tourists and avi-tourists in the four-county region along the Rio Grande.

An estimated 95% of the land on the Mexico border in Texas is privately owned. By starting the border-wall in the Santa Ana NWR, the Trump Administration wishes to avoid the logistical predicament of working with private landowners to build a wall in their backyards.



Photo: USFWS

The Administration is also aiming to use the REAL ID Act of 2005 to bypass environmental protections and processes that would normally be applied to a construction project of this nature. Standard environmental and wildlife laws like the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act would be bypassed to expedite construction.

If the border wall through Santa Ana NWR gets a free pass, planned as it is through the elevated border levee (under the jurisdiction of the International Boundary and Water Commission) that traverses the refuge, then nearby properties up- and downriver for at least 25 miles are at risk. The plans include a totally cleared buffer zone of 50 yards (including a service road) on the south side of the wall. Sections of the proposed wall will also impact parcels of the associated Lower Rio Grande National Wildlife Refuge, and even Texas state properties (such as Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park) and county properties, as well as private properties along what is generally considered to be a broad wildlife corridor.

The National Wildlife Refuge System and our border refuges should not be splintered up simply because the land is owned by the federal government. These lands have been preserved for solid wildlife management reasons, and it is unconscionable that this Administration would consider building a wall through these lands without serious public process or discussion.

A serious investigation on the long-term biological and economic impacts of the border wall in this area is in order, including the impact on the refuges, other public lands, and adjacent

properties. The current plans at Santa Ana are not only an assault on a much-beloved NWR, they constitute a taking of Stamp-invested property. Therefore, included in any assessment should be a compensation element, enough to make the area biologically productive, commensurate with the investments already made over the years at Santa Ana and Lower Rio Grande National Wildlife Refuges. Beyond that, compensation made to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (where Duck Stamp dollars are deposited) is also justified.

Security along the border, of course, is important, and some wildlife-compatible fencing is justified. Still, the currently suggested wall and accompanying south-side cleared buffer may not actually contribute to security. There are probably better ways to address the issue under these circumstances; USFWS Law Enforcement could be enhanced for all parcels of the Refuge System in the LRGV.

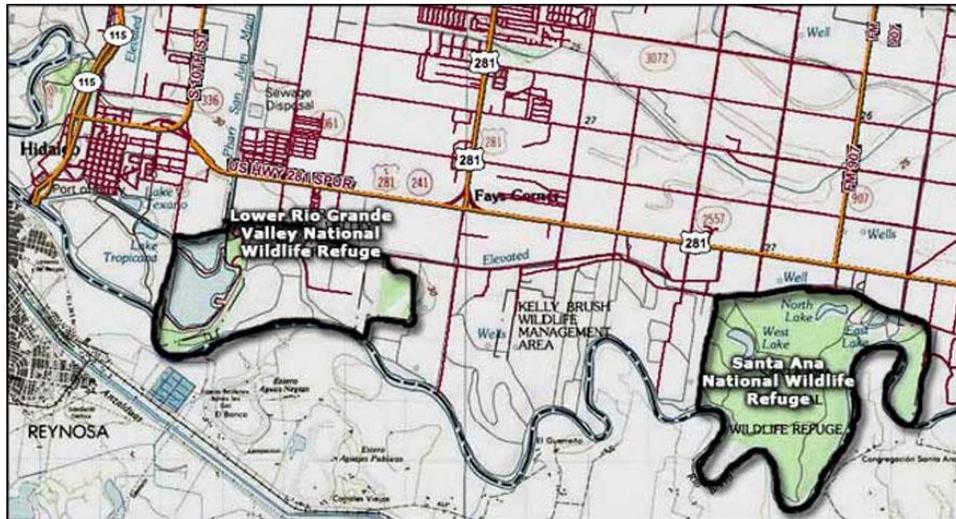
Unfortunately, the plans are proceeding in this area without asking for input from the very people who ought to have priority - American citizens, taxpayers, Duck Stamp buyers, community stakeholders, and users.

Texas Senator John Cornyn (R) has remarked on this environmentally sensitive issue that it is "imperative for federal officials to consult with local leaders on what the appropriate solutions might look like." He added that a physical border wall "is only a piece of the puzzle" and that "it may well be that rather than a physical wall in some of these places that technology will allow the Border Patrol to do its job just as effectively."

Nonetheless, the current Administration seems to be advancing with this ill-advised border wall despite objections.

You can express your opinions and [access a model letter to reach Congress](#) on this important issue from the National Wildlife Refuge Association, a model you are encouraged to edit to indicate your own specific concerns.

Calling your [Representative in the House](#) and [Senators](#) is also highly recommended.



On this map, you can see how some immediate properties upriver from Santa Ana NWR connect with the refuge. Implications for other properties - some many miles upriver and downriver - are considerable. Any planned wall construction on the levee - marked as "Elevated" here and at some places a mile or more inside the U.S. - almost serves to relinquish territory southward between the levee/border wall and the river.

## THE NEXT STAMP ART CONTEST COMING IN SEPTEMBER

By Tim Eisele

The 2017 Federal Duck Stamp Contest will be held September 15 and 16, 2017 at the Noel Fine Arts Center in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

Five or fewer species of waterfowl are selected each year for the contest and one of these is required to be the dominant feature of the art entry (defined as being in the foreground and clearly the focus of attention). The five species that are eligible for the 2017 contest are the following: Mallard, Gadwall, Cinnamon Teal, Blue-winged Teal, and Harlequin Duck.

The public is invited to see the contest entries beginning at 9 a.m., September 15 and 16, and watch the judging, which will begin at 10 a.m. The event is free and open to the public. Some of the events leading up to the actual judging, include the following:

- A display of waterfowl artwork from the collection from the Leigh Yawkey Art Museum, known for its internationally acclaimed "Birds in Art" exhibition, from August 28 to September 24.
- A gallery party on September 8.
- Showing of *The Million Dollar Duck* documentary film on September 14.
- A seminar "Giving Hunters a Shot" on September 20 at UW-Stevens Point.
- A duck decoy carving contest and exhibition sponsored by the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association (WWA) on September 15 and 16.

According to Mike Pierce, WWA decoy carving contest chair, the entries will be open for viewing by the public on Friday, September 15 and during the contest judging, on September

16. Exhibition hours are 9:30 to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday in the Dreyfus Hall on the UW-Stevens Point campus.



Photo: UW-Stevens Point  
College of Natural Resources

The effort to bring the contest to the state was the brainchild of Dr. Christine Thomas, dean of the College of Natural Resources at UW-Stevens Point. Thomas, who serves on several conservation organization boards of directors including Ducks Unlimited (DU), and was the founder of the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program, served as a judge in the Federal Duck Stamp Contest in 2012 and invited the contest to Wisconsin. "I am so thrilled and glad that we are getting it here with the interest in wetlands and waterfowl in Stevens Point and Wisconsin," Thomas said.

Wisconsin itself has long been a leader in the number of Ducks Unlimited members and money raised at DU banquets, plus has active organizations such as the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, many other groups dedicated to natural resources, and numerous talented wildlife artists.

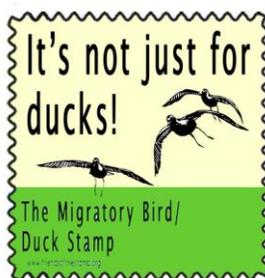
UW-Stevens Point is also a conservation leader, the largest undergraduate traditional natural resources program in the country. Many of its graduates are involved in key positions at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

An informative new website established by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point for the 2017 Federal Duck Stamp Contest is now available, [showing details of the contest and associated activities](#).

## 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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